DRAMATIS PERSONÆ AND DRAMATIC ROMANCES & LYRICS

ILLUSTRATED BY ELEANOR F. BRICKDALE

Illustrated by Blackall

10 Plates

Michael Philip Davies.

1926.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ; & DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/dramatispersonae0000robe

OH, TO BE IN ENGLAND
NOW THAT APRIL'S THERE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ; & DRAMATIC ROMANCES & LYRICS

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

ILLUSTRATED BY

ELEANOR FORTESCUE BRICKDALE

CHATTO & WINDUS

MCMIX.

All rights reserved

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

ROBERT BROWNING'S "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics" are here reprinted as they were first published, excepting that the text of those poems included in the subsequent editions of "Dramatic Romances" agrees with that finally approved by the author. The imperfect version of "Saul" is omitted, as this poem will be found in its entirety in the companion volume also illustrated by Miss Brickdale,—"Pippa Passes; and Men and Women."

For permission to reproduce the copyright text of "Dramatis Personæ," and that of the poems indicated above, the publishers are indebted to the courtesy of Messrs Smith, Elder & Co.

CONTENTS

Dramatis Personæ

James Lee's Wife

I. James Lee's Wife speaks at the Window — *Page* 1

II. By the Fireside — 2

III. In the Doorway — 3

IV. Along the Beach — 3

V. On the Cliff — 5

VI. Reading a Book under the Cliff — 6

VII. Among the Rocks — 8

VIII. Beside the Drawing Board — 8

IX. On Deck — 11

Gold Hair: a Story of Pornic — 12

The Worst of It — 17

Dîs Aliter Visum; or, le Byron de nos Jours — 20

Too Late — 25

Abt Vogler — 29

Rabbi Ben Ezra — 34

A Death in the Desert — 40

Caliban upon Setebos; or, Natural Theology in the Island — 60

Confessions — 68

May and Death — 69

Deaf and Dumb: a Group by Woolner — 70

Prospice — 71

Eurydice to Orpheus: a Picture by Leighton — 72

Youth and Art — 72

A Face — 74

A Likeness — 75

Mr Sludge, "the Medium" *Page* 77
Apparent Failure 120
Epilogue 122

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics
Cavalier Tunes
I. Marching along 129
II. Give a Rouse 130
III. Boot and Saddle 131
My last Duchess 131
Count Gismond: Aix in Provence 133
Incident of the French Camp 137
Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister 138
In a Gondola 140
Artemis Prologizes 148
Waring 151
Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli 158
Cristina 160
Madhouse Cell
I. Johannes Agricola in Meditation 162
II. Porphyria's Lover 163
Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr, 1842 165
The Pied Piper of Hamelin 166
How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix 175
Pictor Ignotus 178
The Italian in England 180
The Englishman in Italy 184
The Lost Leader 192
The Lost Mistress 193
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad 194
Home-Thoughts, from the Sea 195
Nationality in Drinks 196

CONTENTS

The Bishop orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church *Page* 197
Garden-Fancies
I. The Flower's Name 200
II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis 202
The Laboratory: Ancien Régime 204
The Confessional: Spain 206
The Flight of the Duchess 208
Earth's Immortalities 235
Song: "Nay but you, who do not love her" 235
The Boy and the Angel 236
Meeting at Night 238
Parting at Morning 239
Time's Revenges 239
The Glove 241

ILLUSTRATIONS

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there (*see page* 194) *Frontispiece*

With whom began Love's voyage full-sail *to face page* 2

But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear 33

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold 74

"To suppose one cheat
Can gull all these, were more miraculous" 97

The Pied Piper 170

Garden Fancies: The Flower's Name 200

The Flight of the Duchess 214

Is she not pure gold, my mistress? 235

"When the heart suffers a blow" 245

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JAMES LEE'S WIFE

I. James Lee's Wife speaks at the Window

AH, Love, but a day
And the world has changed!
The sun 's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky 's deranged:
Summer has stopped.

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love.
For the lake, its swan;
For the dell, its dove;
And for thee—(oh, haste!)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

II. By the Fireside

IS all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France!
Well, poor sailors took their chance;
I take mine.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea:
Do sailors eye the casement—mute,
Drenched and stark,
From their bark—
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm safe house and happy freight
—Thee and me?

God help you, sailors, at your need!
Spare the curse!
For some ships, safe in port indeed,
Rot and rust,
Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept:
That is worse.

Who lived here before us two?
Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever—would I knew!—
Watch the man
With whom began
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your teeth!)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares?

WITH WHOM BEGAN
LOVE'S VOYAGE FULL-SAIL

III. In the Doorway

THE swallow has set her six young on the rail,
And looks sea-ward:
The water 's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale
To the leeward,—
On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the wind.
"Good fortune departs, and disaster 's behind,"—
Hark, the wind with its wants and its infinite wail!

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake:
How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its stake!
My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks curled.

Yet here are we two; we have love, house enough,
With the field there,
This house of four rooms, that field red and rough,
Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a bent;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an event;
And they both will be gone at November's rebuff.

But why must cold spread? but wherefore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an infinite range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness and cold?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be bold!
Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter estrange!

IV. Along the Beach

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love—is that much true?
And so I did love, so I do:
What has come of it all along?

I took you—how could I otherwise?
For a world to me, and more;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth!
Now do I mis-state, mistake?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth,
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake?

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love! not so, indeed!
You were just weak earth, I knew:
With much in you waste, with many a weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

And such as you were, I took you for mine:
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures?

Well, and if none of these good things came,
What did the failure prove?
The man was my whole world, all the same,
With his flowers to praise or his weeds to blame,
And, either or both, to love.

Yet this turns now to a fault—there! there!
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 't is all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song:

"How the light, light love, he has wings to fly
"At suspicion of a bond:
"My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-bye,
"Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,
"And why should you look beyond?"

V. On the Cliff

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock:
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face:
No iron like that!
Baked dry; of a weed, of a shell, no trace:
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly:
No turf, no rock: in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red!

Is it not so
With the minds of men?
The level and low,
The burnt and bare, in themselves; but then
With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,—
Love settling unawares!

VI. Reading a Book under the Cliff

"STILL ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?
"Which needs the other's office, thou or I?
"Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
"And can, in truth, my voice untie
"Its links, and let it go?

"Art thou a dumb wronged thing that would be righted,
"Entrusting thus thy cause to me? Forbear!
"No tongue can mend such pleadings; faith, requited
"With falsehood,—love, at last aware
"Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

"We have them; but I know not any tone
"So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
"Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
"If they knew any way to borrow
"A pathos like thy own?

"Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the sighs? The one
"So long escaping from lips starved and blue,
"That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun
"Stretches her length; her foot comes through
"The straw she shivers on;

"You had not thought she was so tall: and spent,
"Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers shut
"Close, close, their sharp and livid nails indent
"The clammy palm; then all is mute:
"That way, the spirit went.

"Or wouldst thou rather that I understand
"Thy will to help me?—like the dog I found
"Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
"Who would not take my food, poor hound,
"But whined and licked my hand."

All this, and more, comes from some young man's pride
Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried:

Instances he must—simply recognize?
  Oh, more than so!—must, with a learner's zeal,
Make doubly prominent, twice emphasize,
  By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the rest!
  Himself the undefeated that shall be:
Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—
  His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest!

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what the wind
  Means in its moaning—by the happy prompt
Instinctive way of youth, I mean; for kind
  Calm years, exacting their accompt
Of pain, mature the mind:

And some midsummer morning, at the lull
  Just about daybreak, as he looks across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
  To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul.—

Then, when the wind begins among the vines,
  So low, so low, what shall it say but this?
"Here is the change beginning, here the lines
  "Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
"The limit time assigns."

Nothing can be as it has been before;
  Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,
  And keep it changeless! such our claim;
So answered,—Never more!

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the world;
  Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and die.
Rise with it, then! Rejoice that man is hurled
  From change to change unceasingly,
His soul's wings never furled!

That 's a new question ; still replies the fact,
  Nothing endures : the wind moans, saying so;
We moan in acquiescence : there 's life's pact,
  Perhaps probation—do *I* know?
God does : endure his act!

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
  On his soul's hands' palms one fair good wise thing
Just as he grasped it! For himself, death's wave;
  While time first washes—ah, the sting!—
O'er all he 'd sink to save.

VII. Among the Rocks

OH, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
  This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
  Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
  Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
  Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

VIII. Beside the Drawing Board

"AS like as a Hand to another Hand!"
  Whoever said that foolish thing,
Could not have studied to understand
  The counsels of God in fashioning,
Out of the infinite love of his heart,
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
From the world of wonder left to praise,
If I tried to learn the other ways
Of love in its skill, or love in its power.
  "As like as a Hand to another Hand":
  Who said that, never took his stand,

Found and followed, like me, an hour,
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear, almost,—of the limit-line!
As I looked at this, and learned and drew,
  Drew and learned, and looked again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
  Its beauty mounted into my brain,
  And a fancy seized me; I was fain
To efface my work, begin anew,
Kiss what before I only drew;
Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
  With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
  I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,
Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing,
  From Hand live once, dead long ago:
Princess-like it wears the ring
  To fancy's eye, by which we know
That here at length a master found
  His match, a proud lone soul its mate,
As soaring genius sank to ground,
  And pencil could not emulate
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear almost!—of the limit-line.
Long ago the god, like me
The worm, learned, each in our degree:
Looked and loved, learned and drew,
  Drew and learned and loved again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
  Till beauty mounted into his brain
And on the finger which outvied
  His art he placed the ring that 's there,
Still by fancy's eye descried,
  In token of a marriage rare:
  For him on earth, his art's despair,
For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
I turned from to a cold clay cast—
I have my lesson, understand
The worth of flesh and blood at last.
Nothing but beauty in a Hand?
Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
"The fool forsooth is all forlorn
"Because the beauty, she thinks best,
"Lived long ago or was never born,—
"Because no beauty bears the test
"In this rough peasant Hand! Confessed!
"'Art is null and study void!'
"So sayest thou? So said not I,
"Who threw the faulty pencil by,
"And years instead of hours employed,
"Learning the veritable use
"Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
"Lines and hue of the outer sheath.
"If haply I might reproduce
"One motive of the powers profuse,
"Flesh and bone and nerve that make
"The poorest coarsest human hand
"An object worthy to be scanned
"A whole life long for their sole sake.
"Shall earth and the cramped moment-space
"Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
"Now the parts and then the whole!
"Who art thou, with stinted soul
"And stunted body, thus to cry
"'I love,—shall that be life's strait dole?
"'I must live beloved or die!'
"This peasant hand that spins the wool
"And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
"Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—

"What use survives the beauty?" Fool!
Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand!
I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX. On Deck

THERE is nothing to remember in me
Nothing I ever said with a grace,
Nothing I did that you care to see,
Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
Such things have been as a mutual flame,
Your soul's locked fast; but, love for a key,
You might let it loose, till I grew the same
In your eyes, as in mine you stand: strange plea!

For then, then, what would it matter to me
That I was the harsh ill-favoured one?
We both should be like as pea and pea;
It was ever so since the world begun:
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and brain,
You, whose least word brought gloom or glee,
Who never lifted the hand in vain—
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

Strange, if a face, when you thought of me,
Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright a brow,
Till you saw yourself, while you cried, "'Tis She!"

Well, you may, you must, set down to me
Love that was life, life that was love;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts approve,
A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

But did one touch of such love for me
  Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
  Round me and round while life endures,—
Could I fancy "As I feel, thus feels he";

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
  And your hair grow these coarse hanks of hair,
Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
  You might turn myself!—should I know or care
When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

GOLD HAIR:

A Story of Pornic

OH, the beautiful girl, too white,
  Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
  And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

Too white, for the flower of life is red;
  Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
  To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in heaven instead.

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
  One grace that grew to its full on earth:
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so spare,
  And her waist want half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss,
  Freshness and fragrance—floods of it, too!
Gold, did I say? Nay, gold's mere dross:
  Here, Life smiled, "Think what I meant to do!"
And Love sighed, "Fancy my loss!"

So, when she died, it was scarce more strange
  Than that, when delicate evening dies,
And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
  There 's a shoot of colour startles the skies
With sudden, violent change,—

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,
  As they put the little cross to her lips,
She changed; a spot came out on her cheek,
  A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

"Not my hair!" made the girl her moan—
  "All the rest is gone or to go;
"But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
  "Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts may
      know!
"Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

The passion thus vented, dead lay she;
  Her parents sobbed their worst on that;
All friends joined in, nor observed degree:
  For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread—not flowing free,

But curled around her brow, like a crown,
  And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck—ay, down
  To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
  Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its hair:
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
  As he planted the crucifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

And thus was she buried, inviolate
  Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar; keeping saintly state
  In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,
  Though your mouth might twitch with a dubious smile,
As they told you of gold, both robe and pall,
  How she prayed them leave it alone awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

Years flew; this legend grew at last
  The life of the lady; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
  Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed:

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not earth;
  Had turned an angel before the time:
Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
  Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

At little pleasant Pornic church,
  It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,
Was taken to pieces: left in the lurch,
  A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

'Twas the space where our sires would lay a saint,
  A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments quaint,
  Dame with chased ring and jewelled rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint;

So we come to find them in after-days
  When the corpse is presumed to have done with gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways:
  For the boys get pelf, and the town applauds,
And the church deserves the praise.

They grubbed with a will: and at length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cæca, and the rest!—
They found—no gaud they were prying for,
No ring, no rose, but—who would have
guessed?—
A double Louis-d'or!

Here was a case for the priest: he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, "There 's a bird
"Chirps in my ear": then, "Bring a spade,
"Dig deeper!"—he gave the word.

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged amid
A mint of money, it served for the nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid!

Hid there? Why? Could the girl be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront?
Had a spider found out the communion-cup,
Was a toad in the christening font?

Truth is truth: too true it was.
Gold! She hoarded and hugged it first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—alas—
Till the humour grew to a head and burst,
And she cried, at the final pass,—

"Talk not of God, my heart is stone!
"Nor lover nor friend—be gold for both!
"Gold I lack; and, my all, my own,
"It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die loth
"If they let my hair alone!"

Louis-d'or, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now do you see? With the priest to shrive,
With parents preventing her soul's release
By kisses that kept alive,—

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
  With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
  For gold, the true sort—"Gold in heaven, if
    you will;
"But I keep earth's too, I hope."

Enough! The priest took the grave's grim yield:
  The parents, they eyed that price of sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
  On the place *to bury strangers in,*
The hideous Potter's Field.

But the priest bethought him: "'Milk that's
    spilt'
  "—You know the adage! Watch and pray!
"Saints tumble to earth with so slight a tilt!
  "It would build a new altar; that, we may!"
And the altar therewith was built.

Why I deliver this horrible verse?
  As the text of a sermon, which now I preach:
Evil or good may be better or worse
  In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

The candid incline to surmise of late
  That the Christian faith proves false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
  Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
  See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
  At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT

WOULD it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide; not you, the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan, undo!

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
When I found my swan and the cure was plain;
The dull turned bright as I caught your white
On my bosom: you saved me—saved in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all through me!

Yes, all through the speckled beast that I am,
Who taught you to stoop; you gave me yourself,
And bound your soul by the vows that damn:
Since on better thought you break, as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram!

Yes, might I judge you, here were my heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as you pleased!
I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or make;
If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
With the conscience-prick and the memory-smart?

But what will God say? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this thing
Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
There 's a heaven above may deserve your love:
Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or meet?

And I to have tempted you! I, who tired
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank! Unwise,
I loved and was lowly, loved and aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you mad,
And you meant to have hated and despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired!

She, ruined? How? No heaven for her?
Crowns to give, and none for the brow
That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?

Hardly! That must be understood!
The earth is your place of penance, then;
And what will it prove? I desire your good,
But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on men,
Nor prove too much for your womanhood.

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
When you walk alone, and review the past;
And I, who so long shall have done with strife,
And journeyed my stage and earned my wage
And retired as was right,—I am called at last
When the devil stabs you, to lend the knife.

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life long:
For a promise broke, not for first words spoke,
The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

Witness beforehand! Off I trip
On a safe path gay through the flowers you flung:
My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good I know
Of a perfect year when we both were young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but wait!
I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots!
It may be for yourself, when you meditate,
That you grieve—for slain ruth, murdered truth.
"Though falsehood escape in the end, what boots?
"How truth would have triumphed!"—you sigh too late.

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I say!
Well, it is lost now; well, you must bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day:
You should hardly grudge, could I be your judge!
But hush! For you, can be no despair:
There's amends: 'tis a secret: hope and pray!

For I was true at least—oh, true enough!
And, Dear, truth is not as good as it seems!
Commend me to conscience! Idle stuff!
Much help is in mine, as I mope and pine,
And skulk through day, and scowl in my dreams
At my swan's obtaining the crow's rebuff.

Men tell me of truth now—"False!" I cry:
Of beauty—"A mask, friend! Look beneath!"
We take our own method, the devil and I,
With pleasant and fair and wise and rare:
And the best we wish to what lives, is—death;
Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie!

Far better commit a fault and have done—
As you, Dear!—for ever; and choose the pure,
And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good again,
And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

Misery! What shall I say or do?
I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade:
Most like, you are glad you deceived me—rue
No whit of the wrong: you endured too long,
Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance the new.

And your sentence is written all the same,
  And I can do nothing,—pray, perhaps:
But somehow the world pursues its game,—
  If I pray, if I curse,—for better or worse:
And my faith is torn to a thousand scraps,
  And my heart feels ice while my words breathe
    flame.

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
  Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
Be happy! Add but the other grace,
  Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
I knew you once: but in Paradise,
  If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

DÎS ALITER VISUM; OR, LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS

STOP, let me have the truth of that!
  Is that all true? I say, the day
Ten years ago when both of us
  Met on a morning, friends—as thus
We meet this evening, friends or what?—

Did you—because I took your arm
  And sillily smiled, "A mass of brass
"That sea looks, blazing underneath!"
  While up the cliff-road edged with heath,
We took the turns nor came to harm—

Did you consider "Now makes twice
  "That I have seen her, walked and talked
"With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,
  "Whose worth I weigh: she tries to sing;
"Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice;

DÎS ALITER VISUM

"Reads verse and thinks she understands;
"Loves all, at any rate, that's great,
"Good, beautiful; but much as we
"Down at the bath-house love the sea,
"Who breathe its salt and bruise its sands:

"While . . . do but follow the fishing-gull
"That flaps and floats from wave to cave!
"There's the sea-lover, fair my friend!
"What then? Be patient, mark and mend!
"Had you the making of your scull?"

And did you, when we faced the church
With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
From human fellowship so far,
Where a few graveyard crosses are,
And garlands for the swallows' perch,—

Did you determine, as we stepped
O'er the lone stone fence, "Let me get
"Her for myself, and what 's the earth
"With all its art, verse, music, worth—
"Compared with love, found, gained, and kept?

"Schumann 's our music-maker now;
"Has his march-movement youth and mouth?
"Ingres's the modern man that paints;
"Which will lean on me, of his saints?
"Heine for songs; for kisses, how?"

And did you, when we entered, reached
The votive frigate, soft aloft
Riding on air this hundred years,
Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,—
Did you draw profit while she preached?

Resolving, "Fools we wise men grow!
"Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
"Some question that might find reply
"As prompt in her stopped lips, dropped eye,
"And rush of red to cheek and brow:

"Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
"'Mid the blue weed-flowers round the mound
"Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
"For one more look at baths and bay,
"Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church last—

"A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and lamed,
"Famous, however, for verse and worse,
"Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
"When gout and glory seat me there,
"So, one whose love-freaks pass unblamed,—

"And this young beauty, round and sound
"As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
"With loves and doves, at all events
"With money in the Three per Cents;
"Whose choice of me would seem profound:—

"She might take me as I take her.
"Perfect the hour would pass, alas!
"Climb high, love high, what matter? Still,
"Feet, feelings, must descend the hill:
"An hour's perfection can't recur.

"Then follows Paris and full time
"For both to reason: 'Thus with us!'
"She 'll sigh, 'Thus girls give body and soul
"'At first word, think they gain the goal,
"'When 'tis the starting-place they climb!

"'My friend makes verse and gets renown;
"'Have they all fifty years, his peers?
"'He knows the world, firm, quiet and gay;
"'Boys will become as much one day:
"'They're fools; he cheats, with beard less brown.

"'For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
"'He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
"'*I want, who am old and know too much;*
"'*I'd catch youth: lend me sight and touch!*
"'*Drop heart's blood where life's wheels grate dry!*

"While I should make rejoinder"—(then
  It was, no doubt, you ceased that least
Light pressure of my arm in yours)
  "'I can conceive of cheaper cures
"'For a yawning fit o'er books and men.

"'What? All I am, was, and might be,
  "'All, books taught, art brought, life's whole
    strife,
"'Painful results since precious, just
  "'Were fitly exchanged, in wise disgust,
"'For two cheeks freshened by youth and sea?

"'All for a nosegay!— what came first;
  "'With fields on flower, untried each side;
"'I rally, need my books and men,
  "'And find a nosegay': drop it, then,
"No match yet made for best or worst!"

That ended me. You judged the porch
  We left by, Norman; took our look
At sea and sky; wondered so few
  Find out the place for air and view;
Remarked the sun began to scorch;

Descended, soon regained the baths,
  And then, good-bye! Years ten since then:
Ten years! We meet: you tell me, now,
  By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
  Your lore! WHO made things plain in vain?
What was the sea for? What, the grey
  Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

Was there nought better than to enjoy?
  No feat which, done, would make time break,
And let us pent-up creatures through
  Into eternity, our due?
No forcing earth teach heaven's employ?

No wise beginning, here and now,
  What cannot grow complete (earth's feat)
And heaven must finish, there and then?
  No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

No grasping at love, gaining a share
  O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
With death, so, sure of range above
  The limits here? For us and love,
Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

This you call wisdom? Thus you add
  Good unto good again, in vain?
You loved, with body worn and weak;
  I loved, with faculties to seek:
Were both loves worthless since ill-clad?

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
  Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
  He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

But what's whole, can increase no more,
  Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its sphere.
The devil laughed at you in his sleeve!
  You knew not? That I well believe;
Or you had saved two souls: nay, four.

For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
  Ankle or something. "Pooh," cry you?
At any rate she danced, all say,
  Vilely; her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE

HERE was I with my arm and heart
And brain, all yours for a word, a want
Put into a look—just a look, your part,—
While mine, to repay it . . . vainest vaunt,
Were the woman, that's dead, alive to hear,
Had her lover, that's lost, love's proof to show!
But I cannot show it; you cannot speak
From the churchyard neither, miles removed,
Though I feel by a pulse within my cheek,
Which stabs and stops, that the woman I loved
Needs help in her grave and finds none near,
Wants warmth from the heart which sends it—so!

Did I speak once angrily, all the drear days
You lived, you woman I loved so well,
Who married the other? Blame or praise,
Where was the use then? Time would tell,
And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me, was the choice of God.
But, Edith dead! no doubting more!
I used to sit and look at my life
As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it: oh, the strife
Of waves at the stone some devil threw
In my life's midcurrent, thwarting God!

But either I thought, "They may churn and chide
"Awhile, my waves which came for their joy
"And found this horrible stone full-tide:
"Yet I see just a thread escape, deploy
"Through the evening-country, silent and safe,
"And it suffers no more till it finds the sea."
Or else I would think, "Perhaps some night
"When new things happen, a meteor-ball

"May slip through the sky in a line of light,
"And earth breathe hard, and landmarks fall,
"And my waves no longer champ nor chafe,
"Since a stone will have rolled from its place:
let be!"

But, dead! All's done with: wait who may,
Watch and wear and wonder who will.
Oh, my whole life that ends to-day!
Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding still,
"The woman is dead that was none of his;
"And the man that was none of hers may go!"
There's only the past left: worry that!
Wreak, like a bull, on the empty coat,
Rage, its late wearer is laughing at!
Tear the collar to rags, having missed his throat;
Strike stupidly on—"This, this and this,
"Where I would that a bosom received the blow!"

I ought to have done more: once my speech,
And once your answer, and there, the end,
And Edith was henceforth out of reach!
Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.
Why, better even have burst like a thief
And borne you away to a rock for us two,
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and brief:
Then changed to myself again—"I slew
"Myself in that moment; a ruffian lies
"Somewhere: your slave, see, born in his place!"

What did the other do? You be judge!
Look at us, Edith! Here are we both!
Give him his six whole years: I grudge
None of the life with you, nay, loathe
Myself that I grudged his start in advance
Of me who could overtake and pass.
But, as if he loved you! No, not he,
Nor anyone else in the world, 'tis plain:

TOO LATE

Who ever heard that another, free
As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,
Poured life out, proffered it—"Half a glance
"Of those eyes of yours and I drop the glass!"

Handsome, were you? 'Tis more than they held,
More than they said; I was 'ware and watched:
I was the 'scapegrace, this rat belled
The cat, this fool got his whiskers scratched:
The others? No head that was turned, no heart
Broken, my lady, assure yourself!
Each soon made his mind up; so and so
Married a dancer, such and such
Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
Or maundered, unable to do much,
And muttered of peace where he had no part:
While, hid in the closet, laid on the shelf,—

On the whole, you were let alone, I think!
So, you looked to the other, who acquiesced;
My rival, the proud man,—prize your pink
Of poets! a poet he was! I've guessed:
He rhymed you his rubbish nobody read,
Loved you and doved you—did not I laugh!
There was a prize! But we both were tried.
Oh, heart of mine, marked broad with her mark,
Tekel, found wanting, set aside,
Scorned! See, I bleed these tears in the dark
Till comfort come and the last be bled:
He? He is tagging your epitaph.

If it would only come over again!
—Time to be patient with me, and probe
This heart till you punctured the proper vein,
Just to learn what blood is: twitch the robe
From that blank lay-figure your fancy draped,
Prick the leathern heart till the—verses spirt!
And late it was easy; late, you walked
Where a friend might meet you; Edith's name

Arose to one's lip if one laughed or talked:
If I heard good news, you heard the same;
When I woke, I knew that your breath escaped;
I could bide my time, keep alive, alert.

And alive I shall keep and long, you will see!
I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
From gutter to cesspool; what cared he
So long as he picked from the filth his prog?
He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
And jollily lived to his hundredth year.
But I will live otherwise: none of such life!
At once I begin as I mean to end.
Go on with the world, get gold in its strife,
Give your spouse the slip and betray your friend!
There are two who decline, a woman and I,
And enjoy our death in the darkness here.

I liked that way you had with your curls
Wound to a ball in a net behind:
Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-girl's,
And your mouth—there was never, to my mind,
Such a funny mouth, for it would not shut;
And the dented chin too—what a chin!
There were certain ways when you spoke, some words
That you know you never could pronounce:
You were thin, however; like a bird's
Your hand seemed—some would say, the pounce
Of a scaly-footed hawk—all but!
The world was right when it called you thin.

But I turn my back on the world: I take
Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my lips.
Bid me live, Edith! Let me slake
Thirst at your presence! Fear no slips:
'Tis your slave shall pay, while his soul endures,
Full due, love's whole debt, *summum jus.*
My queen shall have high observance, planned
Courtship made perfect, no least line

Crossed without warrant. There you stand,
Warm too, and white too: would this wine
Had washed all over that body of yours,
Ere I drank it, and you down with it, thus!

ABT VOGLER

(After he has been extemporizing upon the Musical Instrument of his invention)

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!

And one would bury his brow with a wild plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!

And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God; ay, what was, shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;

BUT GOD HAS A FEW OF US WHOM HE WHISPERS IN THE EAR

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,

And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

GROW old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
"Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,
"Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
"Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must
believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
the throe!

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink
i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live
and learn?"

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
"I see the whole design,
"I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
"Perfect I call Thy plan:
"Thanks that I was a man!
"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
"I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed.
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiescence vain:
"The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age: wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Scull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

SUPPOSED of Pamphylax the Antiochene:
It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek
And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu*:
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,
Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,
Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *Xi*,
From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace:

Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own name.
I may not write it, but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the rest,
And leave off here: beginneth Pamphylax.

I said, "If one should wet his lips with wine,
"And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we find,
"Or else the lappet of a linen robe,
"Into the water-vessel, lay it right,
"And cool his forehead just above the eyes,
"The while a brother, kneeling either side,
"Should chafe each hand and try to make it warm,—
"He is not so far gone but he might speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock
Where, sixty days since the decree was out,
We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while;
But in the midmost grotto: since noon's light
Reached there a little, and we would not lose
The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,
And brought him from the chamber in the depths,
And laid him in the light where we might see;
For certain smiles began about his mouth,
And his lids moved, presageful of the end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o' the cave,
The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat
That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive:
So that if any thief or soldier passed,
(Because the persecution was aware)
Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,
Such man might pass on, joyful at a prize,
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.
Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—dropped a
drop;
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,
Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy his left:
But Valens had bethought him, and produced
And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—turn
And smile a little, as a sleeper does
If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept:
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees, and ran,
Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought,
And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead
Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth proclaiming first,
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word:
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,
As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, "If a friend declared to me,
"This my son Valens, this my other son,
"Were James and Peter,—nay, declared as well
"This lad was very John,—I could believe!
"—Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe:
"So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
"The soul retreated from the perished brain
"Whence it was wont to feel and use the world
"Through these dull members, done with long ago.
"Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:
"And there is nothing lost. Let be, awhile!"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,
How divers persons witness in each man,
Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit,
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,
And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward: but, tending upward for advice,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what Knows:
Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
And leans upon the former, makes it play,
As that played off the first: and, tending up,
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man.
I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, "A stick, once fire from end to end:
"Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark!
"Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
"A little where the fire was: thus I urge
"The soul that served me, till it task once more
"What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,
"And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,
"Trying to taste again the truth of things—"
(He smiled)—"their very superficial truth;
"As that ye are my sons, that it is long
"Since James and Peter had release by death,
"And I am only he, your brother John,
"Who saw and heard, and could remember all.
"Remember all! It is not much to say.

"What if the truth broke on me from above
"As once and oft-times? Such might hap again:
"Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,
"With head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like
brass,
"The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen—
"I who now shudder only and surmise
"'How did your brother bear that sight and live?'

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love
"Through me to men: be nought but ashes here
"That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—
"Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
"No one alive who knew (consider this!)
"—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
"That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
"How will it be when none more saith, 'I saw'?

"Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.
"Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden
teach,
"I went, for many years, about the world,
"Saying, 'It was so; so I heard and saw,'
"Speaking as the case asked: and men believed.
"Afterward came the message to myself
"In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,
"But simply listen, take a book and write,
"Nor set down other than the given word,
"With nothing left to my arbitrament
"To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.
"Then, for my time grew brief, no message more.
"No call to write again, I found a way,
"And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught
"Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength be-
lieve;
"Or I would pen a letter to a friend
"And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more:
"Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.
"But at the last, why, I seemed left alive

"Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
"To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
"When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things:
"Left to repeat, 'I saw, I heard, I knew,'
"And go all over the old ground again,
"With Antichrist already in the world,
"And many Antichrists, who answered prompt
"'Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?
"'Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget:
"'Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe?'
"I never thought to call down fire on such,
"Or, as in wonderful and early days,
"Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;
"But patient stated much of the Lord's life
"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:
"Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
"Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
"Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
"Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
"Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
"Of new significance and fresh result;
"What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
"And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
"For men said, 'It is getting long ago:
"'Where is the promise of His coming?'—asked
"These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
"Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
"I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
"Since I was there, and helpful in my age;
"And, in the main, I think such men believed.
"Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
"Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
"And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
"Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
"We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
"Yet now I wake in such decrepitude

"As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
"Past even the presence of my former self,
"Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
"Till I am found away from my own world,
"Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
"Along with unborn people in strange lands,
"Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—
"'Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
"'Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!'

"And how shall I assure them? Can they share
"—They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
"About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
"Living and learning still as years assist
"Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—
"With me who hardly am withheld at all,
"But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
"Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
"Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
"We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
"To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death
"Of which I wrote 'it was'—to me, it is;
"—Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.
"Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
"Is not His love at issue still with sin
"Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
"Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?
"Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
"To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
"When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,
"And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
"See I the need yet transiency of both,
"The good and glory consummated thence?
"I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak,
"Resume the Power: and in this word 'I see,'
"Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both
"That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds

"His eye and bids him look. These are, I see;
"But ye, the children, His beloved ones too,
"Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass
"I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,
"It had been given a crafty smith to make;
"A tube, he turned ón objects brought too close,
"Lying confusedly insubordinate
"For the unassisted eye to master once:
"Look through his tube, at distance now they lay,
"Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear!
"Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth
"I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
"Diminished into clearness, proved a point
"And far away: ye would withdraw your sense
"From out eternity, strain it upon time,
"Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death,
"Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,
"As though a star should open out, all sides,
"Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
"And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
"Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
"How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
"And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
"Such prize despite the envy of the world,
"And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.
"But see the double way wherein we are led,
"How the soul learns diversely from the flesh!
"With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
"And yields mere basement for the soul's emprise,
"Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
"And warmth was cherishing and food was choice
"To every man's flesh, thousand years ago,
"As now to yours and mine; the body sprang
"At once to the height, and stayed: but the soul,—
no!
"Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
"In Rome or Athens, may descry some point

"Of the eternal power, hid yestereve;
"And, as thereby the power's whole mass extends,
"So much extends the æther floating o'er,
"The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.
"Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these
"Till earth's work stop and useless time run out,
"So duly, daily, needs provision be
"For keeping the soul's prowess possible,
"Building new barriers as the old decay,
"Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
"Putting the question ever, 'Does God love,
"'And will ye hold that truth against the world?'
"Ye know there needs no second proof with good
"Gained for our flesh from any earthly source:
"We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,
"Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
"And guard it safe through every chance, ye know!
"That fable of Prometheus and his theft,
"How mortals gained Jove's fiery flower, grows old
"(I have been used to hear the pagans own)
"And out of mind; but fire, howe'er its birth,
"Here is it, precious to the sophist now
"Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,
"As precious to those satyrs of his play,
"Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
"While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
"Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
"To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
"Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth
"Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,
"Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire
"For gold or purple once he knows its worth?
"Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?
"Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,
"Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,
"And straightway in his life acknowledge it,

"As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
"Sigh ye, 'It had been easier once than now'?
"To give you answer I am left alive;
"Look at me who was present from the first!
"Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,
"My first, befitting me who so had seen:
"'Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
"'Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
"'What should wring this from thee!'—ye laugh and ask.
"What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,
"The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
"And fear of what the Jews might do! Just that,
"And it is written, 'I forsook and fled;'
"There was my trial, and it ended thus.
"Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow
"Another year or two,—what little child,
"What tender woman that had seen no least
"Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
"Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
"Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?
"Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.
"Already had begun the silent work
"Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
"Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt.
"Teachers were busy, whispering 'All is true
"'As the aged ones report; but youth can reach
"'Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
"'And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.'
"Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,
"A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
"Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
"This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
"Till imminent was the outcry 'Save our Christ!'
"Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life

"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.
"Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?
"What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
"'Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
"'Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!'

"Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
"And may I help to bear it with you all,
"Using my weakness which becomes your strength?
"For if a babe were born inside this grot,
"Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
"Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's place,—
"One loving him and wishful he should learn,
"Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
"Month by month here, so made to understand
"How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:
"I think I could explain to such a child
"There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,
"Ay, nor need urge 'I saw it, so believe!'
"It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
"In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,
"Left without me, which must be very soon.
"What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!
"I see you stand conversing, each new face,
"Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,
"On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;
"Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico
"Out of the crowd in some enormous town
"Where now the larks sing in a solitude;
"Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand
"Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:
"And no one asks his fellow any more
"'Where is the promise of His coming?' but
"'Was He revealed in any of His lives,
"'As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul?'

"Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,
"And let us ask and answer and be saved!

"My book speaks on, because it cannot pass;
"One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads
"'Here is a tale of things done ages since;
"'What truth was ever told the second day?
"'Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for
nought.
"'Remains the doctrine, love; well, we must love,
"'And what we love most, power and love in one,
"'Let us acknowledge on the record here,
"'Accepting these in Christ: must Christ then be?
"'Has He been? Did not we ourselves make Him?
"'Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.
"'First of the love, then; we acknowledge Christ—
"'A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
"'We had such love already in ourselves,
"'Knew first what else we should not recognize.
"'Tis mere projection from man's inmost mind,
"'And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
"'Becomes accounted somewhat out of him;
"'He throws it up in air, it drops down earth's.
"'With shape, name, story added, man's old way.
"'How prove you Christ came otherwise at least?
"'Next try the power: He made and rules the world:
"'Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,
"'Unless things have been ever as we see.
"'Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked steeds
"'Brought the sun up the east and down the west,
"'Which only of itself now rises, sets,
"'As if a hand impelled it and a will,—
"'Thus they long thought, they who had will and
hands:
"'But the new question's whisper is distinct,
"'Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves?
"'We have the hands, the will; what made and drives
"'The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,
"'While will and love we do know; marks of these,
"'Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—
"'As that, to punish or reward our race,

"'The sun at undue times arose or set
"'Or else stood still: what do not men affirm?
"'But earth requires as urgently reward
"'Or punishment to-day as years ago,
"'And none expects the sun will interpose:
"'Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
"'Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
"'Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things;
"'Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
"'Man's!—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
"'As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
"'To help these in what form he called his gods.
"'First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,
"'But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long;
"'As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
"'So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
"'What proveth God is otherwise at least?
"'All else, projection from the mind of man!'

"Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
"But place my gospel where I put my hands.

"I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
"That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
"Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
"For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
"This imports solely, man should mount on each
"New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
"The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
"Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
"Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
"Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done;
"And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
"You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
"To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
"And check the careless step would spoil their birth,
"But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,

"Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,
"It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
"Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
"But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
"For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
"Nor miracles need prove it any more.
"Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware
"At first of root and stem, saved both till now
"From tramping ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
"What? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,
"And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?
"No!—grown, his growth lasts; taught, he ne'er
forgets:
"May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

"This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

"I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
"Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
"So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:
"When they can eat, babe's-nurture is withdrawn.
"I fed the babe whether it would or no:
"I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
"I cried once, 'That ye may believe in Christ,
"'Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!'
"I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*
"'*And smile at stories how John's word could cure—*
"'*Repeat that miracle and take my faith?*'
"I say, that miracle was duly wrought
"When, save for it, no faith was possible.
"Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o'
the world,
"Whether the change came from our minds which
see
"Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
"Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
"See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
"Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,
"So faith grew, making void more miracles

"Because too much: they would compel, not help.
"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
"Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
"All questions in the earth and out of it,
"And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
"Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
"In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
"Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
"Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!

"For I say, this is death and the sole death,
"When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
"Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
"And lack of love from love made manifest;
"A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes;
"A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves
"With ignorance was surety of a cure,
"When man, appalled at nature, questioned first
"'What if there lurk a might behind this might?'
"He needed satisfaction God could give,
"And did give, as ye have the written word:
"But when he finds might still redouble might,
"Yet asks, 'Since all is might, what use of will?'
"—Will, the one source of might,—he being man
"With a man's will and a man's might, to teach
"In little how the two combine in large,—
"That man has turned round on himself and stands,
"Which in the course of nature is, to die.

"And when man questioned, 'What if there be love
"'Behind the will and might, as real as they?'—
"He needed satisfaction God could give,
"And did give, as ye have the written word:
"But when, beholding that love everywhere,
"He reasons, 'Since such love is everywhere,
"'And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
"'We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,'—
"How shall ye help this man who knows himself,

"That he must love and would be loved again,
"Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
"Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
"The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
"Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

"If he rejoin, 'But this was all the while
"'A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
"'Thy story of the places, names and dates,
"'Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
"'—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
"'Whence now the second suffers detriment.
"'What good of giving knowledge if, because
"'O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
"'And why refuse what modicum of help
"'Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
"'I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
"'Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
"'Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
"'And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
"'Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
"'And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
"'Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
"'Put question of his famous play again
"'How for the ephemerals' sake Jove's fire was filched,
"'And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
"'*The fact is in the fable*, cry the wise,
"'*Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,*
"'*Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.*
"'As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
"'Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
"'Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?'

"I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
"The very primal thesis, plainest law,
"—Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
"A master to obey, a course to take,
"Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?

"Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
"From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
"From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
"How could man have progression otherwise?
"Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'
"No savage man inquired, 'What am myself?'
"Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
"Man takes that title now if he believes
"Might can exist with neither will nor love,
"In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
"While in himself he recognizes love
"No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
"Since if man prove the sole existent thing
"Where these combine, whatever their degree,
"However weak the might or will or love,
"So they be found there, put in evidence,—
"He is as surely higher in the scale
"Than any might with neither love nor will,
"As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
"(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
"Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self—
"Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!
"Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,
"And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
"The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,
"His life becomes impossible, which is death.

"But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
"He is a mere man, and in humility
"Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
"I point to the immediate consequence
"And say, by such confession straight he falls
"Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
"Made to know that he can know and not more:
"Lower than God who knows all and can all,
"Higher than beasts which know and can so far
"As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,

"Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
"While man knows partly but conceives beside,
"Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
"And in this striving, this converting air
"Into a solid he may grasp and use,
"Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
"Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
"Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
"Such progress could no more attend his soul
"Were all it struggles after found at first
"And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
"Than motion wait his body, were all else
"Than it the solid earth on every side,
"Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
"Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
"He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
"What he considers that he knows to-day,
"Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown;
"Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
"Because he lives, which is to be a man,
"Set to instruct himself by his past self:
"First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
"Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
"Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
"And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
"As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
"The statuary ere he mould a shape
"Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
"The aspiration to produce the same;
"So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,
"Cries ever 'Now I have the thing I see':
"Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,
"From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.
"How were it had he cried 'I see no face,
"'No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay'?
"Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,

"And laughed, 'It is my shape and lives again!'
"Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,
"Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed
"In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
"Right in you, right in him, such way be man's!
"God only makes the live shape at a jet.
"Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?
"The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
"Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;
"But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
"Serve still and are replaced as time requires:
"By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!
"If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
"Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,
"Indulging every instinct of the soul
"There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

"Such is the burthen of the latest time.
"I have survived to hear it with my ears,
"Answer it with my lips: does this suffice?
"For if there be a further woe than such,
"Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,
"So long as any pulse is left in mine,
"May I be absent even longer yet,
"Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,
"Though I should tarry a new hundred years!"

But he was dead; 'twas about noon, the day
Somewhat declining: we five buried him
That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,
And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.
Valens is lost, I know not of his trace;
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,
And could not write nor speak, but only loved:
So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,
I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe!

For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world; they err:
Either mistaking what was darkly spoke
At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech
Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.
Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard!
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this:

"If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
"Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—
"Account Him, for reward of what He was,
"Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
"For see; Himself conceived of life as love,
"Conceived of love as what must enter in,
"Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved
"Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.
"Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.
"But by this time are many souls set free,
"And very many still retained alive:
"Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,
"Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)
"See if, for every finger of thy hands,
"There be not found, that day the world shall end,
"Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word
"That He will grow incorporate with all,
"With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,
"Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?
"Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.
"Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
"Or lost!"

But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

'WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh:
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time,
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate; as well have made Himself:
He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains:
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.

Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the mankin three sound legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;

'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,
And must submit: what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
"I make the cry my maker cannot make
"With his great round mouth; he must blow through
mine!"
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.

'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse for those
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips do grapes.
'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,

Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an orc's armour? Ay,—so spoil His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
By no means for the love of what is worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white
chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,

And licked the whole labour flat: so much for spite.
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?
Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;
Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most
When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:
'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways please.
But what would move my choler more than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days to come,
Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,
"Because he did so yesterday with me,
"And otherwise with such another brute,
"So must he do henceforth and always."—Ay?
Would teach the reasoning couple what "must" means!
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS

If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:
Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,
Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest
at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, "*What I hate, be consecrate*
"*To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate*
"*For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?*"
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He

Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that has told Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!]

CONFESSIONS

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
"Now that I come to die,
"Do I view the world as a vale of tears?"
Ah, reverend sir, not I!

What I viewed there once, what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle labelled "Ether"
Is the house o'ertopping all.

MAY AND DEATH

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it 's improper,
My poor mind 's out of tune.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled the house "The Lodge."

What right had a lounger up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether,"
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

MAY AND DEATH

I WISH that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Aye, and, for me, the fourth part too.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

So, for their sake, be May still May!
  Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me: I bid
  Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
  Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
  Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

That, they might spare; a certain wood
  Might miss the plant; their loss were small:
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
  Its drop comes from my heart, that 's all.

DEAF AND DUMB

A Group by Woolner

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white,
  So may a glory from defect arise:
Only by Deafness may the vexed Love wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
  As favoured mouth could never, through the
    eyes.

PROSPICE

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

A Picture by Leighton

BUT give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
Let them once more absorb me! One look now
Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:
Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied,—no past is mine, no future: look at me!

YOUTH AND ART

IT once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed "They will see some day
"Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
"Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
"And Grisi's existence embittered!"

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

We studied hard in our styles,
  Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air looked out on the tiles,
  For fun watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
  Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
  With fingers the clay adhered to.

And I—soon managed to find
  Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
  And be safe in my corset-lacing.

No harm! It was not my fault
  If you never turned your eye's tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt*,
  Or ran the chromatic scale up:

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
  And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
  With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did not you pinch a flower
  In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
  Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
  (And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
  Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

But I think I gave you as good!
  "That foreign fellow,—who can know
"How she pays, in a playful mood,
  "For his tuning her that piano?"

Could you say so, and never say,
"Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
"And I fetch her from over the way,
"Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?"

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

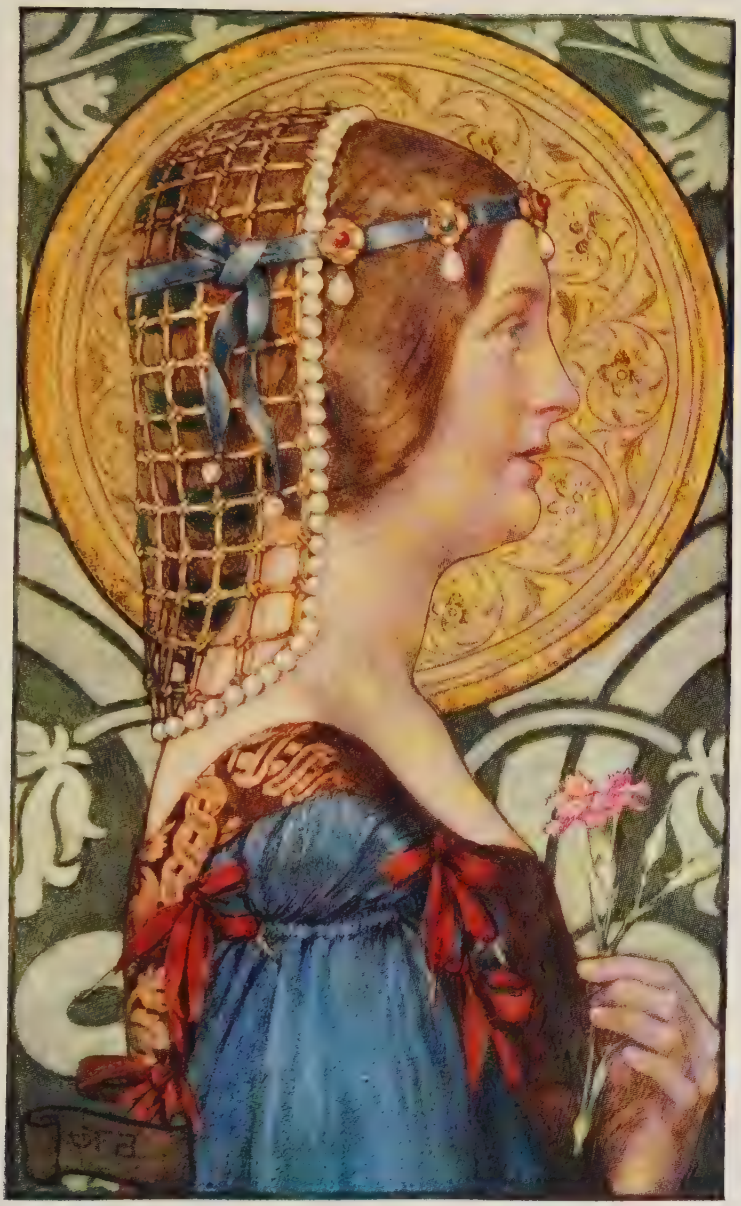
But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

Each life unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE

IF one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts



IF ONE COULD HAVE THAT LITTLE HEAD OF HERS
PAINTED UPON A BACKGROUND OF PALE GOLD

A LIKENESS

Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:
But these are only massed there, I should think,
  Waiting to see some wonder momently
  Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
  (That 's the pale ground you 'd see this sweet face
    by),
  All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

A LIKENESS

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup:
  And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
  Asks, "Who was the lady, I wonder?"
"'Tis a daub John bought at a sale,"
  Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder:
"What a shade beneath her nose!
"Snuff-taking, I suppose,—"
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there 's no wife in the case,
But the portrait 's queen of the place,
Alone mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
  And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist ("not, alas! mine,
  "But my master's, the Tipton Slasher"),
And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
And a satin shoe used for a cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns ("shot in the Chablais")
  And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
  And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,

And the little edition of Rabelais:
Where a friend, with both hands in his pockets,
  May saunter up close to examine it,
  And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb in it,
"But the eyes are half out of their sockets;
"That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
"But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis:
"Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
"What, is not she Jane? Then, who is she?"

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint
  Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
In women I've seen the face of:
  Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fifty in one portfolio.
When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
  Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
Talk about pencil and lyre,
  And the National Portrait Gallery:
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we've turned over twenty,
  And the debt of wonder my crony owes
  Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—"*Festina lentè!*
"What's that sweet thing there, the etching?"
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
  How my cheeks grow red as tomatos,
How my heart leaps! But hearts, after leaps, ache.

"By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
"That other, you praised, of Volpato's."
The fool! would he try a flight further and say—
He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—why, I'll not engage
But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,
I should toss him the thing's self—"'Tis only a duplicate,
"A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!"

MR SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM"

NOW, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once!
This was the first and only time, I'll swear,—
Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only time,
I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted mother, sir!)
All, except this last accident, was truth—
This little kind of slip!—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good champagne,
(I took it for Catawba, you're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head!
"Get up?"
You still inflict on me that terrible face?
You show no mercy?—Not for Her dead sake,
The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even now
Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel something, sir?)
You'll tell?
Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie!
Please, sir! your thumbs are through my wind-pipe, sir!
Ch—ch!

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
When your departed mother spoke those words
Of peace through me, and moved you, sir, so much,
You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them back again,
Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so soon
A trifle of trick, all through a glass too much
Of his own champagne, would change my best of friends
Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 'twas wrong.
I don't contest the point; your anger's just:
Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 'twas wicked of me. There's a thick
Dusk undeveloped spirit (I've observed)
Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,
Or else an Irish emigrant's; yourself
Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,
When we had summoned Franklin to clear up
A point about those shares i' the telegraph:
Ay, and he swore . . . or might it be Tom Paine? . . .
Thumping the table close by where I crouched,
He'd do me soon a mischief: that's come true!
Why, now your face clears! I was sure it would!
Then, this one time . . . don't take your hand away,
Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . . .
You'll promise to forgive me?—or, at least,
Tell nobody of this? Consider, sir!
What harm can mercy do? Would but the shade
Of the venerable dead-one just vouchsafe
A rap or tip! What bit of paper's here?
Suppose we take a pencil, let her write,
Make the least sign, she urges on her child
Forgiveness? There now! Eh? Oh! 'Twas your foot,

And not a natural creak, sir?

Answer, then!
Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I'm waiting to say "thrice!"
All to no use? No sort of hope for me?
It's all to post to Greeley's newspaper?

What? If I told you all about the tricks?
Upon my soul!—the whole truth, and nought else,
And how there's been some falsehood—for your part,
Will you engage to pay my passage out,
And hold your tongue until I'm safe on board?
England's the place, not Boston—no offence!
I see what makes you hesitate: don't fear!
I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,
Yes, this time really it's upon my soul!
Be my salvation!—under Heaven, of course.
I'll tell some queer things. Sixty Vs must do.
A trifle, though, to start with! We'll refer
The question to this table?

How you're changed!
Then split the difference; thirty more, we'll say.
Ay, but you leave my presents! Else I'll swear
'Twas all through those: you wanted yours again,
So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back!
Tread on a worm, it turns, sir! If I turn,
Your fault! 'Tis you'll have forced me! Who's obliged
To give up life yet try no self-defence?
At all events, I'll run the risk. Eh?

Done!
May I sit, sir? This dear old table, now!
Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar!
I've been so happy with you! Nice stuffed chairs,
And sympathetic sideboards; what an end
To all the instructive evenings! (It's alight.)
Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.
Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I'll scream!

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol!
You see, sir, it's your own fault more than mine;
It's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk!
You're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,
So clever, while you cling by half a claw
To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,
Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch
Because you chose it, so it must be safe.
Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough! You spy
Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,
Wanting real foothold,—who can't keep upright
On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you:
There's no outwitting you respecting him!
For instance, men love money—that, you know
And what men do to gain it: well, suppose
A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,
Listening at keyholes, hears the company
Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so forth,
How hard they are to get, how good to hold,
How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in pops he—
"*I*'ve got a V-note!"—what do you say to him?
What's your first word which follows your last kick?
"Where did you steal it, rascal?" That's because
He finds you, fain would fool you, off your perch,
Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir,
Elected your parade-ground: let him try
Lies to the end of the list,—"He picked it up,
"His cousin died and left it him by will,
"The President flung it to him, riding by,
"An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair,
"He dreamed of luck and found his shoe enriched,
"He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold"—
How would you treat such possibilities?
Would not you, prompt, investigate the case
With cow-hide? "Lies, lies, lies," you'd shout: and why?
Which of the stories might not prove mere truth?
This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin!

Let's see, now, give him me to speak for him!
How many of your rare philosophers,
In plaguy books I've had to dip into,
Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made
And made it? Oh, with such philosophers
You're on your best behaviour! While the lad—
With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods,
Nor doubt a moment how he got his prize:
In his case, you hear, judge and execute,
All in a breath: so would most men of sense.

But let the same lad hear you talk as grand
At the same keyhole, you and company,
Of signs and wonders, the invisible world;
How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
More than our vulgarest credulity;
How good men have desired to see a ghost,
What Johnson used to say, what Wesley did,
Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-dee:—
If he break in with, "Sir, *I* saw a ghost!"
Ah, the ways change! He finds you perched and prim
It's a conceit of yours that ghosts may be:
There's no talk now of cow-hide. "Tell it out!
"Don't fear us! Take your time and recollect!
"Sit down first: try a glass of wine, my boy!
"And, David, (is not that your Christian name?)
"Of all things, should this happen twice—it may—
"Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let us know!"
Does the boy blunder, blurt out this, blab that,
Break down in the other, as beginners will?
All's candour, all's considerateness—"No haste!
"Pause and collect yourself! We understand!
"That's the bad memory, or the natural shock,
"Or the unexplained *phenomena!*"

Egad,
The boy takes heart of grace; finds, never fear,
The readiest way to ope your own heart wide,
Show—what I call your peacock-perch, pet post

To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk upon!
"Just as you thought, much as you might expect!
"There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,"
And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate?
If he ruffle a feather, it's "Gently, patiently!
"Manifestations are so weak at first!
"Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short,
"Cures with a vengeance!"

There, sir, that's your style!
You and your boy—such pains bestowed on him,
Or any headpiece of the average worth,
To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him apace,
Make him a Person ("Porson?" thank you, sir!)
Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
You never leave the lesson! Fire alight,
Catch you permitting it to die! You've friends;
There's no withholding knowledge,—least from those
Apt to look elsewhere for their souls' supply:
Why should not you parade your lawful prize?
Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth
Gives it his name, grows notable: how much more,
Who ferrets out a "medium"? "David's yours,
"You highly-favoured man? Then, pity souls
"Less privileged! Allow us share your luck!"
So, David holds the circle, rules the roast,
Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,
Sets-to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise—
Though I say, "lies" all these, at this first stage,
'Tis just for science' sake: I call such grubs
By the name of what they'll turn to, dragonflies.
Strictly, it's what good people style untruth;
But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown thing:
It's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-work—

What never meant to be so very bad—
The knack of story-telling, brightening up
Each dull old bit of fact that drops its shine.
One does see somewhat when one shuts one's eyes,
If only spots and streaks; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves: and pens, good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?
'Tis but a foot in the water and out again;
Not that duck-under which decides your dive.
Note this, for it 's important: listen why.
I 'll prove, you push on David till he dives
And ends the shivering. Here 's your circle, now:
Two-thirds of them, with heads like you their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,
"Lord, who 'd have thought it!" But there 's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits
"Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
"But—do you feel so certain of that boy's?
"Really, I wonder! I confess myself
"More chary of my faith!" That 's galling, sir!
What, he the investigator, he the sage,
When all 's done? Then, you just have shut your eyes,
Opened your mouth, and gulped down David whole,
You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,
And doubled besides; once more, "He heard, we heard,
"You and they heard, your mother and your wife,
"Your children and the stranger in your gates:
"Did they or did they not?" So much for him,
The black sheep, guest without the wedding-garb,
The doubting Thomas! Now 's your turn to crow:
"He 's kind to think you such a fool: Sludge cheats?
"Leave you alone to take precautions!"
Straight
The rest join chorus. Thomas stands abashed,
Sips silent some such beverage as this,

Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
And gulping David in good fellowship,
Than going elsewhere, getting, in exchange,
With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
Some just as tough a morsel. Over the way,
Holds Captain Sparks his court: is it better there?
Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-scenes,
And Mexican War exploits to swallow plump
If you 'd be free o' the stove-side, rocking-chair,
And trio of affable daughters?
Doubt succumbs!
Victory! All your circle 's yours again!
Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
David's performance rounds, each chink gets patched,
Every protrusion of a point 's filed fine,
All 's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
And then return to David finally,
Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-inch.
Here 's a choice birth o' the supernatural,
Poor David 's pledged to! You 've employed no tool
That laws exclaim at, save the devil's own,
Yet screwed him into henceforth gulling you
To the top o' your bent,—all out of one half-lie!

You hold, if there 's one half or a hundredth part
Of a lie, that 's his fault,—his be the penalty!
I dare say! You 'd prove firmer in his place?
You 'd find the courage,—that first flurry over,
That mild bit of romancing-work at end,—
To interpose with "It gets serious, this;
"Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at all.
"Inform your friends I made . . . well, fools of them,
"And found you ready-made. I've lived in clover
"These three weeks: take it out in kicks of me!"
I doubt it. Ask your conscience! Let me know,
Twelve months hence, with how few embellishments
You've told almighty Boston of this passage
Of arms between us, your first taste o' the foil

From Sludge who could not fence, sir! Sludge, your boy!
I lied, sir,—there! I got up from my gorge
On offal in the gutter, and preferred
Your canvas-backs: I took their carver's size,
Measured his modicum of intelligence,
Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
With a raven feather, and next week found myself
Sweet and clean, dining daintily, dizened smart,
Set on a stool buttressed by ladies' knees,
Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
Encouraging my story to uncoil
And creep out from its hole, inch after inch,
"How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
"Tucked up, just as they left me,—than came raps!
"While a light whisked" . . . "Shaped somewhat like
a star?"
"Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am."—"So we
thought!
"And any voice? Not yet? Try hard, next time,
"If you can't hear a voice; we think you may:
"At least, the Pennsylvanian 'mediums' did."
Oh, next time comes the voice! "Just as we hoped!"
Are not the hopers proud now, pleased, profuse
O' the natural acknowledgment?

Of course!
So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the boat,
On we sweep with a cataract ahead,
We 're midway to the Horseshoe: stop, who can,
The dance of bubbles gay about our prow!
Experiences become worth waiting for,
Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost mind,
And compliment the "medium" properly,
Concern themselves about his Sunday coat,
See rings on his hand with pleasure. Ask yourself
How you'd receive a course of treats like these!
Why, take the quickest hack and stall him up,
Cram him with corn a month, then out with him
Among his mates on a bright April morn,

With the turf to tread; see if you find or no
A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!
Much more a youth whose fancies sprout as rank
As toadstool-clump from melon-bed. 'Tis soon,
"Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and carry,
"Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and hang yourself!"
I'm spared all further trouble; all's arranged;
Your circle does my business; I may rave
Like an epileptic dervish in the books,
Foam, fling myself flat, rend my clothes to shreds,
No matter: lovers, friends and countrymen
Will lay down spiritual laws, read wrong things right
By the rule o' reverse. If Francis Verulam
Styles himself Bacon, spells the name beside
With a *y* and a *k*, says he drew breath in York,
Gave up the ghost in Wales when Cromwell reigned,
(As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt to say,
Before I found the useful book that knows)
Why, what harm's done? The circle smiles apace,
"It was not Bacon, after all, you see!
"We understand; the trick's but natural:
"Such spirits' individuality
"Is hard to put in evidence: they incline
"To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped sorts.
"You see, their world's much like a jail broke loose,
"While this of ours remains shut, bolted, barred,
"With a single window to it. Sludge, our friend,
"Serves as this window, whether thin or thick,
"Or stained or stainless; he's the medium-pane
"Through which, to see us and be seen, they peep:
"They crowd each other, hustle for a chance,
"Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play tricks enough!
"Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve aside?
"Up in his place jumps Barnum—'I'm your man,
"'I'll answer for you Bacon!' Try once more!"

Or else it's—"What's a 'medium'? He's a means,
"Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
"Spirits can speak by; he may misconceive,

"Stutter and stammer,—he's their Sludge and drudge,
"Take him or leave him; they must hold their peace,
"Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
"To half-expression through his ignorance.
"Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
"New music he's brimful of; why, he turns
"The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
"And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
"As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now!)
"Comes from the hopper as bran-new Sludge, nought else,
"The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F,
"Or the 'Stars and Stripes' set to consecutive fourths.'
Sir, where's the scrape you did not help me through,
You that are wise? And for the fools, the folk
Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word!)
Pray do you find guests criticize your wine,
Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose?
Then, why your "medium"? What's the difference?
Prove your madeira red-ink and gamboge,—
Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody's a goose
For vaunting both as genuine. "Guests!" Don't fear!
They'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,
And leave you in your glory.

"No, sometimes
"They doubt and say as much!" Ay, doubt they do!
And what's the consequence? "Of course they doubt"—
(You triumph) "that explains the hitch at once!
"Doubt posed our 'medium,' puddled his pure mind;
"He gave them back their rubbish: pitch chaff in,
"Could flour come out o' the honest mill?" So, prompt
Applaud the faithful: cases flock in point,
"How, when a mocker willed a 'medium' once
"Should name a spirit James whose name was George,
"'James' cried the 'medium,'—'twas the test of truth!"
In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves more.
Does this convince? The better: does it fail?

Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—
The grand means, last resource. Look black and big!
"You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short?
"Accomplices in rascality: this we hear
"In our own house, from our invited guest
"Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy
"Exposed by our good faith! Have you been heard?
"Now, then, hear us; one man's not quite worth twelve.
"You see a cheat? Here's some twelve see an ass:
"Excuse me if I calculate: good day!"
Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode.
Sludge waves his hat in triumph!

Or—he don't.
There's something in real truth (explain who can!)
One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won't munch
Because he spies a corn-bag: hang that truth,
It spoils all dainties proffered in its place!
I've felt at times when, cockered, cosseted
And coddled by the aforesaid company,
Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,
But o'er their shoulders spit at the flying man,—
I've felt a child; only, a fractious child
That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grandmother,
Who keep him from the kennel, sun and wind,
Good fun and wholesome mud,—enjoined be sweet,
And comely and superior,—eyes askance
The ragged sons o' the gutter at their game,
Fain would be down with them i' the thick o' the filth,
Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking plain,
And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
Huggings and humbug—gnashed my teeth to mark
A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say,
Ruining a soul so!

But what's "so," what's fixed,
Where may one stop? Nowhere! The cheating's nursed
Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon enough:
But you're for progress. "All old, nothing new?
"Only the usual talking through the mouth,
"Or writing by the hand? I own, I thought
"This would develop, grow demonstrable,
"Make doubt absurd, give figures we might see,
"Flowers we might touch. There's no one doubts you, Sludge!
"You dream the dreams, you see the spiritual sights,
"The speeches come in your head, beyond dispute.
"Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all mouths,
"We want some outward manifestation!—well,
"The Pennsylvanians gained such; why not Sludge?
"He may improve with time!"

Ay, that he may!
He sees his lot: there's no avoiding fate.
'Tis a trifle at first. "Eh, David? Did you hear?
"You jogged the table, your foot caused the squeak,
"This time you're . . . joking, are you not, my boy?"
"N-n-no!"—and I'm done for, bought and sold henceforth.
The old good easy jog-trot way, the . . . eh?
The . . . not so very false, as falsehood goes,
The spinning out and drawing fine, you know,—
Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
Surely not downright cheatery,—any how,
'Tis done with and my lot cast; Cheat's my name:
The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
Has settled what you 'll have the souchong's smack:
The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it's so cruel easy! Oh, those tricks
That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,

Clearly no common conjuror's!—no indeed!
A conjuror? Choose me any craft i' the world
A man puts hand to; and with six months' pains
I'll play you twenty tricks miraculous
To people untaught the trade: have you seen glass
blown,
Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
To the oven? Try and do it! Take my word,
Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe,
To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove
At end o' your slipper,—then put out the lights
And . . . there, there, all you want you'll get, I hope!
I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again! I've done my part,
You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
"Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your verdict, sir?
"You, hardest head in the United States,—
"Did you detect a cheat here? Wait! Let's see!
"Just an experiment first, for candour's sake!
"I'll try and cheat you, Judge! The table tilts:
"Is it I that move it? Write! I'll press your hand:
"Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge!"
Sludge still triumphant! "That a rap, indeed?
"That, the real writing? Very like a whale!
"Then, if, sir you—a most distinguished man,
"And, were the Judge not here, I'd say, . . . no matter!
"Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us in,—
"There's little fear that Sludge will!"

Won't he, ma'am?
But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
While you believed that what produced the raps
Was just a certain child who died, you know,
And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt?

Eh? That's a capital point, ma'am: Sludge begins
At your entreaty with your dearest dead,
The little voice set lisping once again,
The tiny hand made feel for yours once more,
The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
Which image, if a word had chanced recall,
The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang!
A right mood for investigation, this!
One's at one's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
Pompey and Cæsar: but one's own lost child . . .
I wonder, when you heard the first clod drop
From the spadeful at the grave-side, felt you free
To investigate who twitched your funeral scarf
Or brushed your flounces? Then, it came of course
You should be stunned and stupid; then, (how else?)
Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck work.
But now, such causes fail of such effects,
All's changed,—the little voice begins afresh,
Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try
And touch the truth. "Tests? Didn't the creature tell
"Its nurse's name, and say it lived six years,
"And rode a rocking-horse? Enough of tests!
"Sludge never could learn that!"
He could not, eh?
You compliment him. "Could not?" Speak for yourself!
I'd like to know the man I ever saw
Once,—never mind where, how, why, when,—once saw,
Of whom I do not keep some matter in mind
He'd swear I "could not" know, sagacious soul!
What? Do you live in this world's blow of blacks,
Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
Of a smut's worth, no more, no less?—one fact
Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn

What someone was, somewhere, somewhen, somewhy?
You don't tell folk—"See what has stuck to me!
"Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,
"Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
"Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit you!"—
Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week?
"No," you reply, "what use retailing it?
"Why should I?" But, you see, one day you *should*,
Because one day there's much use,—when this fact
Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees
Before the supernatural; proves that Sludge
Knows, as you say, a thing he "could not" know:
Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face
The way the wind drives?

"Could not!" Look you now,
I'll tell you a story! There's a whiskered chap,
A foreigner, that teaches music here
And gets his bread,—knowing no better way:
He says, the fellow who informed of him
And made him fly his country and fall West
Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and sang,
In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long;
Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look,
Nor lifted nose from lapstone; let the world
Roll round his three-legged stool, and news run in
The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.
Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay,
And took his praise from government, you see;
For something like two dollars every week,
He'd engage tell you some one little thing
Of some one man, which led to many more,
(Because one truth leads right to the world's end)
And make you that man's master—when he dined
And on what dish, where walked to keep his health

And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus
His sense out, like an ant-eater's long tongue,
Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
And when 't was crusted o'er with creatures—slick,
Their juice enriched his palate. "Could not Sludge!"
I'll go yet a step further, and maintain,
Once the imposture plunged its proper depth
I' the rotten of your natures, all of you,—
(If one's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)
It's impossible to cheat—that's, be found out!
Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,
All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,
And so has come to grief! You'll find, I think,
Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.
There now, you've told them! What's their prompt
reply?
"Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,
"I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times;
"That's in the 'medium'-nature, thus they're made,
"Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.
"And so all cats are; still, a cat's the beast
"You coax the strange electric sparks from out,
"By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,
"Nor lion, nor lamb: 'tis the cat's nature, sir!
"Why not the dog's? Ask God, who made them
beasts!
"D'ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
"(Like me"—aside)—"like you yourself,"—(aloud)
"—He's stuff to make a 'medium'? Bless your soul,
"'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halfs,
"Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire!
"We take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
"Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
"How, I can't say, not being there to watch:
"He was tried, was tempted by your easiness,—
"He did not take in me!"
Thank you for Sludge!

I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
When what you hear's my best word? 'Tis a chal-
lenge
"Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,
"So you cower duly at your keeper's beck!
"Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
"Only to me! Cheat others if you can,
"Me, if you dare!" And, my wise sir, I dared—
Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
And had the help o' your vaunted manliness
To bully the incredulous. You used me?
Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
And straight they'd own the error! Who was the fool
When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce
Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
To crotchet and quaver? I've made a spirit squeak
In sham voice for a minute, then outbroke
Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,
Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised.
"All right! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
"Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!"
Don't talk of gratitude to me! For what?
For being treated as a showman's ape,
Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
So long as the ape be in it and no man—
Because a nut pays every mood alike.
Curse your superior, superintending sort,
Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
To cure your chimney, bid a "medium" lie
To sweep you truth down! Curse your women too,
Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge

As only a "medium," only the kind of thing
They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to misconceive
Were too preposterous! But I've paid them out!
They've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare:
They had to blush a little and forgive!
"The fact is, children talk so; in next world
"All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
"Made light of: something like old prints, my dear!
"The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
"A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
"A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups
"Of wayside travellers, peasants at their work,
"And, full in front, quite unconcerned, why not?
"Three nymphs conversing with a cavalier,
"And never a rag among them: 'fine,' folk cry—
"And heavenly manners seem not much unlike!
"Let Sludge go on; we'll fancy it's in print!"
If such as came for wool, sir, went home shorn,
Where is the wrong I did them? 'Twas their choice;
They tried the adventure, ran the risk, tossed up
And lost, as some one's sure to do in games;
They fancied I was made to lose,—smoked glass
Useful to spy the sun through, spare their eyes:
And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
They thought to pierce, and, for their pains, grew blind,
Whose were the fault but theirs? While, as things go,
Their loss amounts to gain, the more's the shame!
They've had their peep into the spirit-world,
And all this world may know it! They've fed fat
Their self-conceit which else had starved: what chance
Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
And compassing distinction from the flock,
Friends of a feather? Well, they paid for it,
And not prodigiously; the price o' the play,
Not counting certain pleasant interludes,
Was scarce a vulgar play's worth. When you buy
The actor's talent, do you dare propose
For his soul beside? Whereas my soul you buy!

Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be Macbeth,
Or you 'll not hear his first word! Just go through
That slight formality, swear himself's the Thane,
And thenceforth he may strut and fret his hour,
Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one cares!
Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge as Sludge?
Enough of it all! I 've wiped out scores with you—
Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked
Like tom-fool with your ochre and carmine,
Worn patchwork your respectable fingers sewed
To metamorphose somebody,—yes, I 've earned
My wages, swallowed down my bread of shame,
And shake the crumbs off—where but in your face?

As for religion—why, I served it, sir!
I 'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least, Swedenborg!
In fact, it 's just the proper way to baulk
These troublesome fellows—liars, one and all,
Are not these sceptics? Well, to baffle them,
No use in being squeamish: lie yourself!
Erect your buttress just as wide o' the line,
Your side, as they build up the wall on theirs;
Where both meet, midway in a point, is truth
High overhead: so, take your room, pile bricks,
Lie! Oh, there 's titillation in all shame!
What snow may lose in white, snow gains in rose!
Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—not a bad exchange!
Glory be on her, for the good she wrought,
Breeding belief anew 'neath ribs of death,
Browbeating now the unabashed before,
Ridding us of their whole life's gathered straws
By a live coal from the altar! Why, of old,
Great men spend years and years in writing books
To prove we 've souls, and hardly proved it then:
Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me!
Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose

TO SUPPOSE ONE CHEAT
CAN GULL ALL THESE, WERE MORE MIRACULOUS

He let escape some spice of knavery,—well,
In wisely being blind to it! Don't you praise
Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
And saying . . . what was it—that he could not see
The signal he was bothered with? Ay, indeed!

I'll go beyond: there's a real love of a lie,
Liars find ready-made for lies they make,
As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-plum.
At best, 'tis never pure and full belief;
Those furthest in the quagmire,—don't suppose
They strayed there with no warning, got no chance
Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth,
Bent brow against! Be sure they had their doubts,
And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand! But no!
Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too apprised,
All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved,
And Sludge called "pet": 'twas easier marching on
To the promised land join those who, Thursday next,
Meant to meet Shakespeare; better follow Sludge—
Prudent, oh sure!—on the alert, how else?—
But making for the mid-bog, all the same!
To hear your outcries, one would think I caught
Miss Stokes by the scruff o' the neck, and pitched her flat,
Foolish-face-foremost! Hear these simpletons,
That's all I beg, before my work's begun,
Before I've touched them with my finger-tip!
Thus they await me (do but listen, now!
It's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
The baby voice, though) "In so many tales
"Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,
"Yet, some: a single man's deceived, perhaps—
"Hardly, a thousand: to suppose one cheat
"Can gull all these, were more miraculous far
"Than aught we should confess a miracle"—
And so on. Then the Judge sums up—(it's rare)

Bids you respect the authorities that leap
To the judgment-seat at once,—why don't you note
The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
The spotless honour, indisputable sense
Of the first upstart with his story? What—
Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him?
Fools, these are: ay, and how of their opposites
Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
Believe for a moment?—Men emasculate,
Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs use,
With superstition safely,—cold of blood,
Who saw what made for them i' the mystery,
Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
—As proselytes? No, thank you, far too shrewd!
—But promisers of fair play, encouragers
O' the claimant; who in candour needs must hoist
Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge
To carry off, criticize, and cant about!
Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so?—at any rate,
It's "a new thing" philosophy fumbles at.
Then there's the other picker-out of pearl
From dung-heaps,—ay, your literary man,
Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
O' the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
And the cash that's God's sole solid in this world!
Look at him! Try to be too bold, too gross
For the master! Not you! He's the man for muck;
Shovel it forth, full-splash, he'll smooth your brown
Into artistic richness, never fear!
Find him the crude stuff; when you recognize
Your lie again, you'll doff your hat to it,
Dressed out for company! "For company,"
I say, since there's the relish of success:
Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,

Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
Who ushered in the stranger: you must sigh
"How melancholy, he, the only one
"Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
"Himself gave birth to!"—There's the triumph's
smack!
That man would choose to see the whole world roll
I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip
Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
Of the outworn umber and bistre!

Yet I think
There's a more hateful form of foolery—
The social sage's, Solomon of saloons
And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
To try the edge of his faculty upon,
Prove how much common sense he'll hack and hew
I' the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish!
These were my patrons: these, and the like of them
Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
These I have injured! Gratitude to these?
The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
From the wag that wants the queer jokes for his club,
To the snuff-box-decorator, honest man,
Who just was at his wits' end where to find
So genial a Pasiphae! All and each
Pay, compliment, protect from the police:
And how she hates them for their pains, like me!
So much for my remorse at thanklessness
Toward a deserving public!

But, for God?
Ay, that's a question! Well, sir, since you press—
(How you do tease the whole thing out of me!
I don't mean you, you know, when I say "them":

Hate you, indeed! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge!
Enough, enough—with sugar: thank you, sir!)
Now for it, then! Will you believe me, though?
You've heard what I confess; I don't unsay
A single word: I cheated when I could,
Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
And all the rest; believe that: believe this,
By the same token, though it seem to set
The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
Stick up what I've knocked down; I can't help that
It's truth! I somehow vomit truth to-day
This trade of mine—I don't know, can't be sure
But there was something in it, tricks and all!
Really, I want to light up my own mind.
They were tricks,—true, but what I mean to add
Is also true. First,—don't it strike you, sir?
Go back to the beginning,—the first fact
We're taught is, there's a world beside this world,
With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry;
That much within that world once sojourned here,
That all upon this world will visit there,
And therefore that we, bodily here below,
Must have exactly such an interest
In learning what may be the ways o' the world
Above us, as the disembodied folk
Have (by all analogic likelihood)
In watching how things go in the old home
With us, their sons, successors, and what not.
Oh yes, with added powers probably,
Fit for the novel state,—old loves grown pure,
Old interests understood aright,—they watch!
Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help,
Proportionate to advancement: they're ahead,
That's all—do what we do, but noblier done—
Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off delf,
(To use a figure).

Concede that, and I ask
Next what may be the mode of intercourse
Between us men here, and those once-men there?
First comes the Bible's speech; then, history
With the supernatural element,—you know—
All that we sucked in with our mothers' milk,
Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
Till it's found bone of bone and flesh of flesh.
See now, we start with the miraculous,
And know it used to be, at all events:
What's the first step we take, and can't but take,
In arguing from the known to the obscure?
Why this: "What was before, may be to-day.
"Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul, of course
"My brother's spirit may appear to me."
Go tell your teacher that! What's his reply?
What brings a shade of doubt for the first time
O'er his brow late so luminous with faith?
"Such things have been," says he, "and there's no
doubt
"Such things may be: but I advise mistrust
"Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more than all, your brain,
"Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
"Whenever they propose a ghost to you!"
The end is, there's a composition struck;
'Tis settled, we've some way of intercourse
Just as in Saul's time; only, different:
How, when and where, precisely,—find it out!
I want to know, then, what's so natural
As that a person born into this world
And seized on by such teaching, should begin
With firm expectancy and a frank look-out
For his own allotment, his especial share
I' the secret,—his particular ghost, in fine?
I mean, a person born to look that way,
Since natures differ: take the painter-sort,
One man lives fifty years in ignorance
Whether grass be green or red,—"No kind of eye

"For colour," say you; while another picks
And puts away even pebbles, when a child,
Because of bluish spots and pinky veins—
"Give him forthwith a paint-box!" Just the same
Was I born . . . "medium," you won't let me say,—
Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and everywhere,—
Will that do?

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-truth;
Only,—what in the rest you style their sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,
This, betimes, taught them the old world had one law
And ours another: "New world, new laws," cried
they:
"None but old laws, seen everywhere at work,"
Cried I, and by their help explained my life
The Jews' way, still a working way to me.
Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved the lights,
Or Santa Claus slid down on New Year's Eve
And stuffed with cakes the stocking at my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean the fingered
slate
O' the sum that came to grief the day before.

This could not last long: soon enough I found
Who had worked wonders thus, and to what end:
But did I find all easy, like my mates?
Henceforth no supernatural any more?
Not a whit: what projects the billiard-balls?
"A cue," you answer: "Yes, a cue," said I;
"But what hand, off the cushion, moved the cue?
"What unseen agency, outside the world,
"Prompted its puppets to do this and that,
"Put cakes and shoes and slates into their mind,
"These mothers and aunts, nay even schoolmasters?"
Thus high I sprang, and there have settled since.
Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,

About the greater godsends, what you call
The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your world
Which either is or seems to be? This snap
O' my fingers, sir! My care is for myself;
Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it: that's the use of things.
'Tis easy saying they serve vast purposes,
Advantage their grand selves: be it true or false,
Each thing may have two uses. What's a star?
A world, or a world's sun: doesn't it serve
As taper also, time-piece, weather-glass,
And almanac? Are stars not set for signs
When we should shear our sheep, sow corn, prune
trees?
The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use
To all the acknowledged uses, and declare
If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-night,
It warns me, "Go, nor lose another day,
"And have your hair cut, Sludge!" You laugh: and
why?
Were such a sign too hard for God to give?
No: but Sludge seems too little for such grace:
Thank you, sir! So you think, so does not Sludge!
When you and good men gape at Providence,
Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots prevented, crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle enough,
But private mercies—oh, you've told me, sir,
Of such interpositions! How yourself
Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out, you know,—
You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
And saved your precious self from what befell
The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of this?

Well, sir, I think then, since you needs must know,
What matter had you and Boston city to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings? Much
To you, no doubt: for me—undoubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
Because, however sad the truth may seem,
Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
You set apart that day in every year
For special thanksgiving, were a heathen else:
Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,
Suppose I said "I don't thank Providence
"For my part, owing it no gratitude"?
"Nay, but you owe as much"—you'd tutor me,
"You, every man alive, for blessings gained
"In every hour o' the day, could you but know!
"I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
"Could they but see!" Well, sir, why don't they see?
"Because they won't look,—or perhaps, they can't."
Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do
Look, microscopically as is right,
Into each hour with its infinitude
Of influences at work to profit Sludge?
For that's the case: I've sharpened up my sight
To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast
Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such facts
Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
And those same thanks which you exact from me
Prove too prodigious payment: thanks for what,
If nothing guards and guides us little men?
No, no, sir! You must put away your pride,
Resolve to let Sludge into partnership!
I live by signs and omens: looked at the roof
Where the pigeons settle—"If the further bird,
"The white, takes wing first, I'll confess when
thrashed;
"Not, if the blue does"—so I said to myself
Last week, lest you should take me by surprise:

Off flapped the white,—and I'm confessing, sir!
Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
With only me, i' the world: how can you tell?
"Because unlikely!" Was it likelier, now,
That this our one out of all worlds beside,
The what-d' you-call-'em millions, should be just
Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
And the rest o' the tale? Yet the tale 's true, you know:
Such undeserving clod was graced so once;
Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge?
Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags?
All you can bring against my privilege
Is, that another way was taken with you,—
Which I don't question. It 's pure grace, my luck:
I 'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
And need no formal summoning. You 've a help;
Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
Stamp with your foot or pull the bell: all 's one,
He understands you want him, here he comes.
Just so, I come at the knocking: you, sir, wait
The tongue o' the bell, nor stir before you catch
Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,
Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
Your mother's face turned heavenward: short of these
There 's no authentic intimation, eh?
Well, when you hear, you 'll answer them, start up
And stride into the presence, top of toe,
And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge that sprang
At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-wall!
I think myself the more religious man.
Religion 's all or nothing; it 's no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
No quality o' the finelier-tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff
O' the very stuff, life of life, and self of self.
I tell you, men won't notice; when they do,
They 'll understand. I notice nothing else:
I 'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,

Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint,
Handle and help. It's all absurd, and yet
There's something in it all, I know: how much?
No answer! What does that prove? Man's still man,
Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work
When all's done; but, if somewhat's done, like this,
Or not done, is the case the same? Suppose
I blunder in my guess at the true sense
O' the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—
What if the tenth guess happen to be right?
If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz
Yield me the nugget? I gather, crush, sift all,
Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.
To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh!)
When first I see a man, what do I first?
Why, count the letters which make up his name,
And as their number chances, even or odd,
Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course:
Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,
And haven't I found a patron, sir, in you?
"Shall I cheat this stranger?" I take apple-pips,
Stick one in either canthus of my eye,
And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)
I'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.
You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
You judge of character by other rules:
Don't your rules sometimes fail you? Pray, what rule
Have you judged Sludge by hitherto?

Oh, be sure,
You, everybody blunders, just as I,
In simpler things than these by far! For see:
I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre
Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,
And then declared, for outcome of his pains,
Next summer must be dampish: 'twas a drought.
His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,
Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,

And proved a sage indeed: how came his lore?
Because one brindled heifer, late in March,
Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow
He got into his head that drought was meant!
I don't expect all men can do as much:
Such kissing goes by favour. You must take
A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist
I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
Open-mouthed, like my friend the ant-eater,
Letting all nature's loosely-guarded motes
Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think yourself
The one i' the world, the one for whom the world
Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth!
Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,
Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell, thrive,
Breed, multiply, and bring you food enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir!
Oh, what you mean is this! Such intimate way,
Close converse, frank exchange of offices,
Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great
With the infinitely small, betokened here
By a course of signs and omens, raps and sparks,—
How does it suit the dread traditional text
O' the "Great and Terrible Name"? Shall the Heaven
of Heavens
Stoop to such child's play?

Please, sir, go with me
A moment, and I'll try to answer you.
The "*Magnum et terribile*" (is that right?)
Well, folk began with this in the early day;
And all the acts they recognized in proof
Were thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, whirlwinds,
dealt
Indisputably on men whose death they caused.
There, and there only, folk saw Providence
At work,—and seeing it, 'twas right enough
All heads should tremble, hands wring hands amain,

And knees knock hard together at the breath
O' the Name's first letter; why, the Jews, I 'm told,
Won't write it down, no, to this very hour,
Nor speak aloud: you know best if 't be so.
Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept
(Because somehow people once born must live)
Out of the sound, sight, swing and sway o' the Name,
Into a corner, the dark rest of the world,
And safe space where as yet no fear had reached;
'Twas there they looked about them, breathed again,
And felt indeed at home, as we might say.
The current o' common things, the daily life,
This had their due contempt; no Name pursued
Man from the mountain-top where fires abide,
To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in short:
Such was man's vulgar business, far too small
To be worth thunder: "small," folk kept on, "small,"
With much complacency in those great days!
A mote of sand, you know, a blade of grass—
What was so despicable as mere grass,
Except perhaps the life o' the worm or fly
Which fed there? These were "small" and men were great.
Well, sir, the old way 's altered somewhat since,
And the world wears another aspect now:
Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else
Puts a new lens in it: grass, worm, fly grow big:
We find great things are made of little things,
And little things go lessening till at last
Comes God behind them. Talk of mountains now?
We talk of mould that heaps the mountain, mites
That throng the mould, and God that makes the mites.
The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,
The simplest of creations, just a sac
That 's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once, yet lives
And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,
If simplified still further one degree:

The small becomes the dreadful and immense
Lightning, forsooth? No word more upon that!
A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass, and there 's
Your dollar's-worth of lightning! But the cyst—
The life of the least of the little things?

No, no!
Preachers and teachers try another tack,
Come near the truth this time: they put aside
Thunder and lightning: "That's mistake," they cry,
"Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor sport,
"But do appreciable good, like tides,
"Changes o' the wind, and other natural facts—
"'Good' meaning good to man, his body or soul.
"Mediate, immediate, all things minister
"To man,—that's settled: be our future text
"'We are His children!'" So, they now harangue
About the intention, the contrivance, all
That keeps up an incessant play of love,—
See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it!
Well, sir, I put this question: I'm a child?
I lose no time, but take you at your word:
How shall I act a child's part properly?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to live
With such a thought as this a-worrying you?
"She has it in her power to throttle me,
"Or stab or poison: she may turn me out,
"Or lock me in,—nor stop at this to-day,
"But cut me off to-morrow from the estate
"I look for"—(long may you enjoy it, sir!)
"In brief, she may unchild the child I am."
You never had such crotchets? Nor have I!
Who, frank confessing childship from the first
Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,
So, don't fear,—know what might be, well enough

But know too, child-like, that it will not be,
At least in my case, mine, the son and heir
O' the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my style.
But do you fancy I stop short at this?
Wonder if suit and service, son and heir
Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find?
If, looking for signs proper to such an one,
I straight perceive them irresistible?
Concede that homage is a son's plain right,
And, never mind the nods and raps and winks,
'Tis the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty: why, of course!
I have presentiments; my dreams come true:
I fancy a friend stands whistling all in white
Blithe as a boblink, and he's dead I learn.
I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,
And sell him; he goes mad next week and snaps.
I guess that stranger will turn up to-day
I have not seen these three years; there's his knock
I wager "sixty peaches on that tree!"—
That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
That your wife's brother's cousin's name was George—
And win on all points. Oh, you wince at this?
You'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,
Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to trump?
With Sludge it's too absurd? *Fine, draw the line*
Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not mine!

Bless us, I'm turning poet! It's time to end.
How you have drawn me out, sir! All I ask
Is—am I heir or not heir? If I'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same personage
(To judge by what we read i' the newspaper)
Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,
Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness: why want

Attendance, sir, when helps in his father's house
Abound, I'd like to know?

Enough of talk!
My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
Why, which of those who say they disbelieve,
Your clever people, but has dreamed his dream,
Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his fact
He can't explain, (he'll tell you smilingly)
Which he's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,
So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of it
Bidding you still be on your guard, you know,
Because one fact don't make a system stand,
Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter: that's the way!
Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by piece,
The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded these,
But never made a system stand, nor dug!
So wise men hold out in each hollowed palm
A handful of experience, sparkling fact
They can't explain; and since their rest of life
Is all explainable, what proof in this?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of gold,
And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each fool has found
O' the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,
Truth questionless though unexplainable,
And the miraculous proved the commonplace!
The other fools believed in mud, no doubt—
Failed to know gold they saw: was that so strange?
Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-fugues,
"Time" with the foil in carte, jump their own height,
Cut the mutton with the broadsword, skate a five,
Make the red hazard with the cue, clip nails
While swimming, in five minutes row a mile,
Pull themselves three feet up with the left arm,

Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances?
The Sludge with luck, who sees the spiritual facts
His fellows strive and fail to see, may rank
With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share
The drawback! Think it over by yourself;
I have not heart, sir, and the fire 's gone grey.
Defect somewhere compensates for success,
Everyone knows that. Oh, we 're equals, sir!
The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win the race:
Do you suppose I 'scape the common lot?
Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,
I guess what 's going on outside the veil,
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
In the islands where his kind are, so must fall
To capering by himself some shiny night,
As if your back-yard were a plot of spice—
Thus am I 'ware o' the spirit-world: while you,
Blind as a beetle that way,— for amends,
Why, you can double fist and floor me, sir!
Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid horse of yours,
Laugh while it lightens, play with the great dog,
Speak your mind though it vex some friend to hear,
Never brag, never bluster, never blush,—
In short, you 've pluck, when I 'm a coward—there!
I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
I 'm paralyzed, my hand 's no more a hand,
Nor my head a head, in danger: you can smile
And change the pipe in your cheek. Your gift 's not
mine.
Would you swap for mine? No! but you 'd add my gift
To yours: I dare say! I too sigh at times,
Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor flinch,
Keep cool when threatened, did not mind so much

Being dressed gaily, making strangers stare,
Eating nice things; when I 'd amuse myself,
I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain
I 'm—now the President, now Jenny Lind,
Now Emerson, now the Benicia Boy—
With all the civilized world a-wondering
And worshipping. I know it 's folly and worse;
I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the soul,
But I can't cure myself: despond, despair,
And then, hey, presto, there 's a turn o' the wheel,
Under comes uppermost, fate makes full amends;
Sludge knows and sees and hears a hundred things
You all are blind to,—I 've my taste of truth,
Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice no doubt,
But you 've your vices also: I 'm content.

What, sir? You won't shake hands? "Because I cheat!"
"You 've found me out in cheating!" That 's enough
To make an apostle swear! Why, when I cheat,
Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught in the act,
Are you, or, rather, am I sure o' the fact?
(There 's verse again, but I 'm inspired somehow.)
Well then I 'm not sure! I may be, perhaps,
Free as a babe from cheating: how it began,
My gift,—no matter; what 'tis got to be
In the end now, that 's the question; answer that!
Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was holding mine,
Leading me whither, I had died of fright:
So, I was made believe I led myself.
If I should lay a six-inch plank from roof
To roof, you would not cross the street, one step,
Even at your mother's summons: but, being shrewd,
If I paste paper on each side the plank
And swear 'tis solid pavement, why, you 'll cross
Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet below:
I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for stone.
Some impulse made me set a thing o' the move
Which, started once, ran really by itself;

Beer flows thus, suck the siphon; toss the kite,
It takes the wind and floats of its own force.
Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack
Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it!
Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,
She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie,
And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine;
All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive!
I don't know if I move your hand sometimes
When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,
If my knee lifts the table all that height,
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt,
Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz
Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
Why I speak so much more than I intend,
Describe so many things I never saw.
I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat: but in another sense
I'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie
Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps
Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it? This is why!
There's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice
In any desecration of one's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin!) who describes
The single gift o' the land's virginity,
Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
(I've but a hazy notion—help me, sir!)
For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,
One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore!
Well, now, they understood a many things
Down by Nile city, or wherever it was!

I 've always vowed, after the minute's lie,
And the end's gain,—truth should be mine henceforth.
This goes to the root o' the matter, sir,—this plain
Plump fact: accept it and unlock with it
The wards of many a puzzle!

Or, finally,
Why should I set so fine a gloss on things?
What need I care? I cheat in self-defence,
And there 's my answer to a world of cheats!
Cheat? To be sure, sir! What 's the world worth else?
Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars?
Don 't it want trimming, turning, furbishing up
And polishing over? Your so-styled great men,
Do they accept one truth as truth is found,
Or try their skill at tinkering? What 's your world?
Here are you born, who are, I 'll say at once,
Of the luckiest kind, whether in head and heart,
Body and soul, or all that helps them both.
Well, now, look back: what faculty of yours
Came to its full, had ample justice done
By growing when rain fell, biding its time,
Solidifying growth when earth was dead,
Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due?
Never! You shot up and frost nipped you off,
Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout;
One faculty thwarted its fellow: at the end,
All you boast is "I had proved a topping tree
"In other climes"—yet this was the right clime
Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you 've force
Wasted like well-streams: old,—oh, then indeed,
Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
Through which you 'd play off wondrous waterwork;
Only, no water 's left to feed their play.
Young,—you 've a hope, an aim, a love: it 's tossed
And crossed and lost: you struggle on, some spark
Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
Through cold and pain; these in due time subside,

Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
Up with it on the tripod! It's extinct.
Spend your life's remnant asking, which was best,
Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine?
Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
Another life,—you've lost this world—you've gained
Its knowledge for the next. What knowledge, sir,
Except that you know nothing? Nay, you doubt
Whether 'twere better have made you man or brute,
If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
There's your world!

Give it me! I slap it brisk
With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre: what's it now?
Changed like a rock-flat, rough with rusty weed,
At first wash-over o' the returning wave!
All the dry dead impracticable stuff
Starts into life and light again; this world
Pervaded by the influx from the next.
I cheat, and what's the happy consequence?
You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
As the price of worse than nothing! No mere film
Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
Against the outstretch of your very arms
And legs i' the sunshine moralists forbid!
What would you have? Just speak and, there, you see!
You're supplemented, made a whole at last,
Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
But so near, that the very difference piques,

Shows that e'en better than this best will be—
This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste since, one stage more,
And you arrive at the palace: all half real,
And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
That helps the interchange of natures, flesh
Transfused by souls, and such souls! Oh, 'tis choice!
And if at whiles the bubble, blown too thin,
Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
The real world through the false,—what *do* you see?
Is the old so ruined? You find you're in a flock
O' the youthful, earnest, passionate—genius, beauty,
Rank and wealth also, if you care for these:
And all depose their natural rights, hail you,
(That's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-fellow,
Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow mine,
I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike!
Why, here's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia! Here's true life indeed,
And the world well won now, mine for the first time!

And all this might be, may be, and with good help
Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge lies!
Why, he's at worst your poet who sings how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never was,
Did this or the other impossible great thing!
He's Lowell—it's a world (you smile applause),
Of his own invention—wondrous Longfellow,
Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does more than they,
And acts the books they write: the more his praise!

But why do I mount to poets? Take plain prose—
Dealers in common sense, set these at work,
What can they do without their helpful lies?
Each states the law and fact and face o' the thing
Just as he'd have them, finds what he thinks fit,

Is blind to what missuits him, just records
What makes his case out, quite ignores the rest.
It's a History of the World, the Lizard Age,
The Early Indians, the Old Country War,
Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you please,
All as the author wants it. Such a scribe
You pay and praise for putting life in stones,
Fire into fog, making the past your world.
There's plenty of "How did you contrive to grasp
"The thread which led you through this labyrinth?
"How build such solid fabric out of air?
"How on so slight foundation found this tale,
"Biography, narrative?" or, in other words,
"How many lies did it require to make
"The portly truth you here present us with?"
"Oh," quoth the penman, purring at your praise,
"'Tis fancy all; no particle of fact:
"I was poor and threadbare when I wrote that book
"'Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at Thebes?
"We writers paint out of our heads, you see!"
"—Ah, the more wonderful the gift in you.
"The more creativeness and godlike craft!"
But I, do I present you with my piece,
It's "What, Sludge? When my sainted mother spoke
"The verses Lady Jane Grey last composed
"About the rosy bower in the seventh heaven
"Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep house,—
"You made the raps? 'T was your invention that?
"Cur, slave and devil!"—eight fingers and two thumbs
Stuck in my throat!

Well, if the marks seem gone
'Tis because stiffish cock-tail, taken in time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.
There, sir! I bear no malice: 't isn't in me.
I know I acted wrongly: still, I've tried
What I could say in my excuse,—to show
The devil's not all devil . . . I don't pretend,

He's angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I've lost you, lost myself,
Lost all-l-l-l-. . .

No—are you in earnest, sir?
O yours, sir, is an angel's part! I know
What prejudice prompts, and what's the common course
Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit:
Only you rise superior to it all!
No, sir, it don't hurt much; it's speaking long
That makes me choke a little: the marks will go!
What? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,
And not a word to Greeley? One—one kiss
O' the hand that saves me! You'll not let me speak,
I well know, and I've lost the right, too true!
But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so! That's, I think,
My bed-room candle. Good-night! Bl-l-less you, sir.

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard! Cowardly scamp!
I only wish I dared burn down the house
And spoil your sniggering! Oh what, you're the man?
You're satisfied at last? You've found out Sludge?
We'll see that presently: my turn, sir, next!
I too can tell my story: brute,—do you hear?—
You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
In just such a fit of passion: no, it was . . .
To get this house of hers, and many a note
Like these . . . I'll pocket them, however . . . five,
Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
Or else you poisoned her! Confound the cuss!
Where was my head? I ought to have prophesied
He'll die in a year and join her: that's the way.
I don't know where my head is: what had I done?
How did it all go? I said he poisoned her,
And hoped he'd have grace given him to repent,

Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
And called me cheat: I thrashed him,—who could help?
He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
To cut and run and save him from disgrace:
I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
An end of him! Begin elsewhere anew!
Boston's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
V-notes are something, liberty still more.
Beside, is he the only fool in the world?

APPARENT FAILURE

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."
Paris Newspaper

NO, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
I passed through Paris, stopped a day
To see the baptism of your Prince;
Saw, made my bow, and went my way:
Walking the heat and headache off,
I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

Only the Doric little Morgue!
The dead-house where you show your drowned:
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case;
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:
Let them! No Briton's to be baulked!

First came the silent gazers; next,
A screen of glass, we're thankful for;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday,
So killed themselves: and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

Poor men, God made, and all for that!
The reverence struck me; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

How did it happen, my poor boy?
You wanted to be Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart?
You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
You've gained what no Republic missed?
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!
What fancy was it turned your brain?
Oh, women were the prize for you!
Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
The right thing to extinguish lust!

It's wiser being good than bad;
It's safer being meek than fierce:
It's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

EPILOGUE

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David*

ON the first of the Feast of Feasts,
The Dedication Day,
When the Levites joined the Priests
At the Altar in robed array,
Gave signal to sound and say,—

When the thousands, rear and van,
Swarming with one accord
Became as a single man
(Look, gesture, thought and word)
In praising and thanking the Lord,—

When the singers lift up their voice,
And the trumpets made endeavour,
Sounding, "In God rejoice!"
Saying, "In Him rejoice
"Whose mercy endureth for ever!"—

Then the Temple filled with a cloud;
Even the House of the Lord;
Porch bent and pillar bowed:
For the presence of the Lord,
In the glory of His cloud,
Had filled the House of the Lord.

EPILOGUE

SECOND SPEAKER, *as Renan*

Gone now! All gone across the dark so far,
  Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shutting still,
Dwindling into the distance, dies that star
  Which came, stood, opened once! We gazed our fill
With upturned faces on as real a Face
  That, stooping from grave music and mild fire,
Took in our homage, made a visible place
  Through many a depth of glory, gyre on gyre,
For the dim human tribute. Was this true?
  Could man indeed avail, mere praise of his,
To help by rapture God's own rapture too,
  Thrill with a heart's red tinge that pure pale bliss?
Why did it end? Who failed to beat the breast,
  And shriek, and throw the arms protesting wide,
When a first shadow showed the star addressed
  Itself to motion, and on either side
The rims contracted as the rays retired;
  The music, like a fountain's sickening pulse,
Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
  Some vestige of a Face no pangs convulse,
No prayers retard; then even this was gone,
  Lost in the night at last. We, lone and left
Silent through centuries, ever and anon
  Venture to probe again the vault bereft
Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
  Of multitudinous points, yet suns, men say—
And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
  But where may hide what came and loved our clay?
How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
  The star which chose to stoop and stay for us?
Unroll the records! Hailed ye such advance
  Indeed, and did your hope evanish thus?
Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred?
  We shall not look up, know ourselves are seen,
Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
  Acting or suffering, have the disk's serene
Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,

Nor doubt that, were mankind inert and numb,
Its core had never crimsoned all the same,
Nor, missing ours, its music fallen dumb?
Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch appals,
Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those the most
On whose repugnant brow the crown next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER

Witless alike of will and way divine,
How heaven's high with earth's low should intertwine!
Friends, I have seen through your eyes: now use mine!

Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
Look at his head and heart, find how and why
He differs from his fellows utterly:

Then, like me, watch when nature by degrees
Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
(They said of old) the instinctive water flees

Toward some elected point of central rock,
As though, for its sake only, roamed the flock
Of waves about the waste: awhile they mock

With radiance caught for the occasion,—hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse,—

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
O' the current for a minute: then they wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the thing,

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak as bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

When you see what I tell you,—nature dance
About each man of us, retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to enhance

His worth, and—once the life, his product, gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sustained,
And show thus real, a thing the North but feigned—

When you acknowledge that one world could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from you,—

Why, where 's the need of Temple, when the walls
O' the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and trumpet-calls?

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES & LYRICS

INSCRIBED
TO
JOHN KENYON, ESQ.,
IN THE HOPE THAT A RECOLLECTION OF HIS OWN
SUCCESSFUL
"RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE"
MAY INDUCE HIM TO ADMIT GOOD-NATUREDLY
THIS HUMBLER PROSE ONE OF
HIS VERY GRATEFUL & AFFECTIONATE FRIEND
R. B.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS

*CAVALIER TUNES**

I. Marching along

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're (*Chorus*) *marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(*Cho.*) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

* Such Poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces;" being, though for the most part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(*Cho.*) *March we along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. Give a Rouse

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

(*Cho.*) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(*Cho.*) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III. Boot and Saddle

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,

(*Cho.*) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay,

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
"I've better counsellors; what counsel they?

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

MY LAST DUCHESS

Ferrara

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
"Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint
"Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but
thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
"Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
"Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and make excusé,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

COUNT GISMOND

Aix in Provence

CHRIST GOD who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it; when he struck at length
My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed!
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves; 't was all their deed;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen
  By virtue of her brow and breast;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
  As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head!

But no: they let me laugh, and sing
  My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
  A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs—

And come out on the morning-troop
  Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
  Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

And they could let me take my state
  And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
  My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

However that be, all eyes were bent
  Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 'twas time I should present
  The victor's crown, but . . . there, 'twill last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
  With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
  Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—

But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
"About her! Let her shun the chaste,
"Or lay herself before their feet!
"Shall she whose body I embraced
"A night long, queen it in the day?
"For honour's sake no crowns, I say!"

I? What I answered? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength on it? No more says the soul.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event:
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,

Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
  The while! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
  Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
  Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
  And said "Here die, but end thy breath
"In full confession, lest thou fleet
  "From my first, to God's second death!
"Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied
"To God and her," he said, and died.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
  —What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
  My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

Over my head his arm he flung
  Against the world; and scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
  A little shifted in its belt:
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
  We two walked forth to never more.
Return. My cousins have pursued
  Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten! May his soul find grace!

Our elder boy has got the clear
  Great brow; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?
  And have you brought my tercel back?
I just was telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

YOU know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
  A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
  Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
  Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
  Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
  "That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army-leader Lannes
  "Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
  A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
  Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
  And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
  You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
  Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
  Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
"We've got you Ratisbon!
"The Marshal's in the market-place,
"And you'll be there anon
"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,
"Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside
Smiling the boy fell dead.

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
  Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
  And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
  Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L. for our initial!
  (He, he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
  Squats outside the Convent bank,
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
  Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
  —Can't I see his dead eye glow
Bright, as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
  (That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
  Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
  As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I, the Trinity illustrate,
  Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
  While he drains his at one gulp!

Oh, those melons! If he's able
  We're to have a feast; so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
  All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
  Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
  Keep 'em close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
  Once you trip on it, entails

Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails.
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of Heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to Hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel,
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r—you swine!

IN A GONDOLA

He sings

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

IN A GONDOLA

She speaks

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
"This woman's heart and soul and brain
"Are mine as much as this gold chain
"She bids me wear; which" (say again)
"I choose to make by cherishing
"A precious thing, or choose to fling
"Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more!
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,
Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
What's left but—all of me to take?
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage,
In practising with gems, can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings

Past we glide, and past, and past!
  What's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
  Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing

To his couch the purchased bride:
  Past we glide!

Past we glide, and past, and past!
  Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
  Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
  Past we glide!

She Sings

The moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can
    pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy. . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering
away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

They trail me, these three godless knaves
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame
or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water—feel!

Go find the bottom! Would you stay me?
There!
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks

Row home? must we row home? Too surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where's a trace

Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe o see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look: your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings

Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell!
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back

That overfloods my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, "All thanks, Siora!"—
Heart to heart
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!

[*He is surprised, and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy
breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more
kiss)—can die!

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed
By none whose temples whiten this the world.
Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along;
I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace;
On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,
And every feathered mother's callow brood,
And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here;
And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above,
Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways,
And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,
Neglected homage to another god:
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
Hippolutos exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord:
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve.
And Theseus, read, returning, and believed,
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained
That of his wishes should be granted three,

And one he imprecated straight—"Alive
"May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands!"
Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the prince
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car
That give the feet a stay against the strength
Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their speed
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster flung
His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,
Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast,
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein
Which either hand directed; nor they quenched
The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell,
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands
On that detested beach, was bright with blood
And morsels of his flesh: then fell the steeds
Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,
Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
His people, who had witnessed all afar,
Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos.
But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
I, in a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.
Then Theseus lay the woefullest of men,
And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid
His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed
To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;
Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some faded poor
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object
Such slackness to my worshippers who turn
Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand,
As they had climbed Olumpos to report
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—
I interposed: and, this eventful night,—
(While round the funeral pyre the populace
Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped
O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—
As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed
Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night,
And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars
Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,
And splendid gums like gold),—my potency
Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
In the thrice-venerable forest here.
And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,
Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught
The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,
To know their secret'st virtue and express
The saving soul of all: who so hath soothed
With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,
Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,
And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,
And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot

Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer,
Divine presenter of the healing rod,
Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer!
Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies!
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
That strew the turf around the twain! While I
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

WARING

I

WHAT 'S become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
"Stray-leaves, fragments, blurrs and blottings,
"Certain first steps were achieved
"Already which"—(is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
"In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedgeside chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.

E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavour
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I'd say, "to only have conceived,
"Planned your great works, apart from
progress,
"Surpasses little works achieved!"
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned
child!

Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humours license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures born perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten
beach

As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian
strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow
lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
"Give me my so-long promised son,
"Let Waring end what I begun!"
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung

To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and
pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what's to really be?
A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow,

As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

II

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
(How all turned to him who spoke!
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

"We were sailing by Triest
"Where a day or two we harboured:
"A sunset was in the West,
"When, looking over the vessel's side,
"One of our company espied
"A sudden speck to larboard.
"And as a sea-duck flies and swims
"At once, so came the light craft up,
"With its sole lateen sail that trims
"And turns (the water round its rims
"Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
"And by us like a fish it curled,
"And drew itself up close beside,
"Its great sail on the instant furled,
"And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
"(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
"'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
"'Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
"'A pilot for you to Triest?
"'Without one, look you ne'er so big,
"'They'll never let you up the bay!
"'We natives should know best.'
"I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
"Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
"'Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
"And one, half-hidden by his side
"Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
"With great grass hat and kerchief black,
"Who looked up with his kingly throat,
"Said somewhat, while the other shook
"His hair back from his eyes to look
"Their longest at us; then the boat,
"I know not how, turned sharply round,
"Laying her whole side on the sea
"As a leaping fish does; from the lee
"Into the weather, cut somehow
"Her sparkling path beneath our bow
"And so went off, as with a bound,
"Into the rosy and golden half
"O' the sky, to overtake the sun
"And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
"Its singing cave; yet I caught one
"Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
"And neither time nor toil could mar
"Those features: so I saw the last
"Of Waring!"—You? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever

At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim
dear!

CRISTINA

SHE should never have looked at me,
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell . . . there's my weakness . . .
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
"Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
"That the Sea feels"—no "strange yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish
"Where there's chance of least returning."

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence, fleets again for ages:
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses, if you choose it,
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt, as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together?

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear but there's provision
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me—I have gained her!
Her soul's mine: and, thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder,
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended—
And then, come the next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

I.—MADHOUSE CELL

Johannes Agricola in Meditation

THERE'S heaven above, and night by night
I look right through the gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me; splendour-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child;
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so:
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irreversibly
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop!
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up;

Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast:
While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,
And bloat and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,
And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;
Whose life on earth aspired to be
One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win
If not love like God's love for me,
At least to keep his anger in;
And all their striving turned to sin.
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun!
God, whom I praise; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand?

II.—MADHOUSE CELL

Porphyria's Lover

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
  Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
  Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
  And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
  And, last, she sat down by my side
  And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
  And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
  And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
  And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
  Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
  From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
  And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
  Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
  For love of her, and all in vain:
  So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
  Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
  Made my heart swell, and still it grew
  While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
  Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
  In one long yellow string I wound
  Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
  I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
  I warily oped her lids: again
  Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

1842

AS I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned Homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
As I ride, as I ride,
All that's meant me: satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A Child's Story

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER)

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;

A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheese out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;
"And as for our Corporation—shocking
"To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
"For dolts that can't or won't determine
"What's best to rid us of our vermin!
"You hope, because you're old and obese,
"To find in the furry civic robe ease?
"Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
"To find the remedy we're lacking,
"Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
"I wish I were a mile hence!

"It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
"I'm sure my poor head aches again,
"I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
"Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
"Anything like the sound of a rat
"Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
"Had walked this way from his painted tomb-
stone!"

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,
"By means of a secret charm, to draw
"All creatures living beneath the sun,

"That creep or swim or fly or run,
"After me so as you never saw!
"And I chiefly use my charm
"On creatures that do people harm,
"The mole and toad and newt and viper;
"And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
"In Tartary I freed the Cham,
"Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
"I eased in Asia the Nizam
"Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
"And as for what your brain bewilders,
"If I can rid your town of rats
"Will you give me a thousand guilders?"
"One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
  Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
  Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
  Wherein all plunged and perished!
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
  (As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
"I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
"And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
"Into a cider-press's gripe:
"And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
"And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
"And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
"And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
"And it seemed as if a voice
  "(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
"Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
  "'The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
"'So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
"'Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!'
"And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
"All ready staved, like a great sun shone
"Glorious scarce an inch before me,
"Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'
"—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.

THE PIED PIPER

"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
"Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
"Consult with carpenters and builders,
"And leave in our town not even a trace
"Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand
guilders!"

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock:
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing
wink,
"Our business was done at the river's brink;
"We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
"And what 's dead can't come to life, I think.
"So, friend, we 're not the folks to shrink
"From the duty of giving you something for
drink,
"And a matter of money to put in your poke;
"But as for the guilders, what we spoke
"Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
"Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
"A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
"I 've promised to visit by dinnertime
"Bagdat, and accept the prime
"Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he 's rich in,
"For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
"Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:

"With him I proved no bargain-driver,
"With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
"And folks who put me in a passion
"May find me pipe after another fashion."

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook
"Being worse treated than a Cook?
"Insulted by a lazy ribald
"With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
"You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
"Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

Once more he stept into the street
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry

To the children merrily skipping by,
—Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
"He's forced to let the piping drop,
"And we shall see our children stop!"
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say,—
"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
"I can't forget that I'm bereft
"Of all the pleasant sights they see,
"Which the Piper also promised me.
"For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
"Joining the town, and just at hand,
"Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
"And the flowers put forth a fairer hue,
"And everything was strange and new;
"The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
"And their dogs outran our fallow deer,

"And honey-bees had lost their stings,
"And horses were born with eagles' wings:
"And just as I became assured
"My lame foot would be speedily cured,
"The music stopped and I stood still,
"And found myself outside the hill,
"Left alone against my will,
"To go now limping as before,
"And never hear of that country more!"

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
"On the Twenty-second of July,
"Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free fróm rats or
fróm mice,
If we 've promised them aught, let us keep our
promise!

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"

[16—]

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokern, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffield, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime,
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent
back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay
spur!
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
"We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick
wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,

And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground,
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

PICTOR IGNOTUS

Florence, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it split, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,
Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct

Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
  Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
  And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
  The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
  Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites!
  This world seemed not the world it was before:
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped
  . . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped
  Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!
  These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
  And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
  Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—"This I love, or this I hate,
  "This likes me more, and this affects me less!"
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
  My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
  With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—
  At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
  Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
  While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
  'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
  O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
  Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

THAT second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew. When these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,

Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground.
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast.
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me
Rested the hopes of Italy.
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
"They fix the price, because I hate
"The Austrians over us: the State
"Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—
"If you betray me to their clutch,
"And be your death, for aught I know,
"If once they find you saved their foe.
"Now, you must bring me food and drink,
"And also paper, pen and ink,
"And carry safe what I shall write

"To Padua, which you'll reach at night
"Before the duomo shuts; go in,
"And wait till Tenebræ begin;
"Walk to the third confessional,
"Between the pillar and the wall,
"And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
"Say it a second time, then cease;
"And if the voice inside returns,
"*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*
"*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
"My letter where you placed your lip;
"Then come back happy we have done
"Our mother service—I, the son,
"As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming. We conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much"—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
"Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—"This faith was shown
"To Italy, our mother; she
"Uses my hand and blesses thee."
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I have a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be.
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise: while some opine
"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles

With the calm smile: some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

Piano di Sorrento

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet!
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn
Had net-worked with brown

The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads,—speckled white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night,—
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree:
And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,
Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover:
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.
No seeing our skiff

Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps;
Himself too as bare to the middle
—You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the vine-
yards
Grape-harvest began.
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving;
Your girls that are older,—
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling

Their laps with the snails
Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,
Three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That colour of popes.
Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you:
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence:
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter;
Next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
Scirocco is loose!
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black!
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest!
No refuge, but creep

Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains;
Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious—
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
Those hairy gold orbs!
But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh
When he recognized down in the valley
His mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water;
And soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;
And still as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
As up still we trudged
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
And place was e'en grudged
'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
Like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster which climbed there to die
From the ocean beneath—
Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed
That clung to the path,
And dark rosemary ever a-dying
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
And lentisks as staunch

To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And . . . what shows a branch
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves;
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady,
Till, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!
No rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!
Still moving with you;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view
To observe the intruder; you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you surprise them.
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over
And love (they pretend)
—Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,
The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut:
All is silent and grave:
'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
How fair! but a slave.
So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered
As greenly as ever
Those isles of the siren, your Galli;
No ages can sever

The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them,—halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
No farther to-day,
Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum halfway already.
Fortù, shall we sail there together
And see from the sides
Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
Where the siren abides?
Shall we sail round and round them, close over
The rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the grey glassy water
To glorious green?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black turret
With never a door,
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;
Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear?
—The secret they sang to Ulysses
When, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano;
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there;

One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
—Chew, abbot's own cheek!
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.
To-morrow's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizened
With red and blue papers;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
A-blaze with long tapers;
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,

Religiously popped;
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
And more poppers bang.
At all events, come—to the garden
As far as the wall;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

—"Such trifles!" you say?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise
—If 't were proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies!

THE LOST LEADER

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was their's who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,

Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from
their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then,—record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath
untrod,
One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike
gallantly,
Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait
us,
Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne!

THE LOST MISTRESS

ALL'S over, then—does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns gray.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I'll resign:

For each glance of that eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stays in my soul for ever!—

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows—
Hark! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent-spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

Here's to Nelson's memory!
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British beer:
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I guard it, be it little or much;
Here's one the Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
He says that at Greenwich they show the beholder
Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder,
"For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
"Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging,
"Up against the mizen rigging!"

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west
died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz
Bay;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar
lay;
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar
grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me,—how can I
help England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

MY heart sunk with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask;
And still at yonder broken edges
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

Our laughing little flask, compell'd
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from Life's light and motion,
And dropped into Death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then with an impudence nought could abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder,
To tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder,
And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting!

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not!
Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,

Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were
missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all I have bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!

'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,

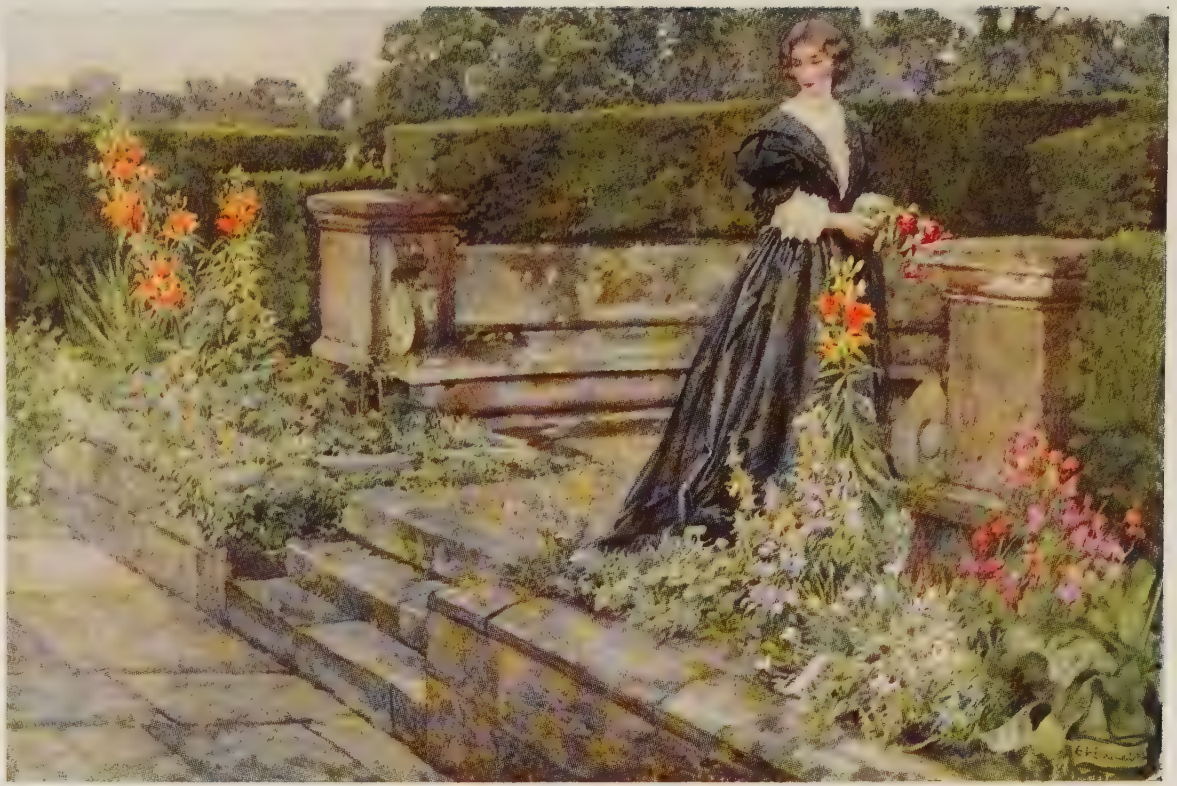
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

GARDEN-FANCIES

I. The Flower's Name

HERE'S the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.



GARDEN FANCIES: THE FLOWER'S NAME

GARDEN-FANCIES

Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name.
What a name! was it love, or praise?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase!
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
But, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest foot-fall
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—I knew at the bottom rain drippings stagnate;
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,

A spider had spun his web across,
And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover;
When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

All that life, and fun, and romping,
All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic.

Come, old Martyr! What, torment enough is it?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self!

Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf:
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

THE LABORATORY

[*Ancien Régime*]

NOW that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

He is with her; and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a fillagree-basket!

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head,
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands, should
drop dead!

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me—
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those strong, great eyes,—say, "no!"
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would
fall,
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
Let death be felt and the proof remain;
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose,
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL

[*Spain*]

IT is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! thro' my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,
Till spite of them I reach the world!

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den,
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said—and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

But when I faulter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
"Despair not,—strenuously retrieve!
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine
"To lawful love, almost divine.

"For he is young, and led astray,
"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,

"To change the laws of church and state;
"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
"Its cloud away and save his soul.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed
"Of all his plans, and next day steal
"To me, and all those plans reveal,
"That I and every priest, to purge
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright,
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy,
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of Hell;
And I lay listening in such pride,
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray
"The one spot from his soul away;
"To-night he comes, but not the same
"Will look!" At night he never came.

Nor next night: on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born:
The church was empty; something drew
My steps into the street; I knew
It led me to the market-place—
Where, lo,—on high—the father's face!

That horrible black scaffold drest—
The stapled block . . . God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast—
Till near one busy hangman pressed—
And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,
No Earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and Man my cry—
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

YOU 'RE my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too;
So here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you 've passed the cornfield country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,

That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
  Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
  Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
  And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
  Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
  (And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
  (When I was happy and young, not old!)
I in the kennel, he in the bower:
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he 'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that 's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
  To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
  Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
"The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
  "Needs the Duke's self at his side:"

The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
  But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
  And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
  And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
  The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
  In a chamber next to an ante-room,
  Where he breathed the breath of page and
      groom
  What he called stink, and they, perfume:
—They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchéss
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
  And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,

And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?
—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out:
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire!

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:
And out of a convent, at the word,

Came the lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting clothes
Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive:
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that 's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover,
When suddenly appeared the Duke:
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey;
For such things must begin some one day.

In a day or two she was well again;
As who should say, "You labour in vain!
"This is all a jest against God, who meant
"I should ever be, as I am, content
"And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she might have given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:

They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike
him!
So found the Duke, and his mother like him:
The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,
"But I shall find in my power to right me!"
Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a
morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be
hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated—
To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't!

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather

By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
"Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
"And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
"In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
"Let her preside at the disemboweling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer

Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!

Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
  Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
  Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
  And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
  With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
  And a sinking at the lower abdomen
  Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under;
  And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
  But a troop of Gipsies on their march?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
  After reaching all lands beside;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
  And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace
    there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place
    there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found

With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned:
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth—not a use to which they don't
turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve
inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their
tinkle;
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white
daughters:
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw
sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.

And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
  Of no use now but to gather brine,
  And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding:
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine
    pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-
    end,—
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
  A word in reply; and in vain she felt
  With twitching fingers at her belt
  For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,

Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery—
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude:
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,

Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had forgone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken:
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,

I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
  Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
  As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
  From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
  When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent:
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
  —Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,

As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.
I said "Is it blessing, is it banning,
"Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
"Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
—Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
—Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white
throat curving;
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened:
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world:
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said:—

"And so at last we find my tribe.
"And so I set thee in the midst,

"And to one and all of them describe
"What thou saidst and what thou didst,
"Our long and terrible journey through,
"And all thou art ready to say and do
"In the trials that remain:
"I trace them the vein and the other vein
"That meet on thy brow and part again,
"Making our rapid mystic mark;
"And I bid my people prove and probe
"Each eye's profound and glorious globe
"Till they detect the kindred spark
"In those depths so dear and dark,
"Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
"Circling over the midnight sea.
"And on that round young cheek of thine
"I make them recognize the tinge,
"As when of the costly scarlet wine
"They drip so much as will impinge
"And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
"One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
"Over a silver plate whose sheen
"Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
"For so I prove thee, to one and all,
"Fit, when my people ope their breast,
"To see the sign, and hear the call,
"And take the vow, and stand the test
"Which adds one more child to the rest—
"When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
"And the world is left outside.
"For there is probation to decree,
"And many and long must the trials be
"Thou shalt victoriously endure,
"If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
"Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
"Of the prize he dug from its mountain-tomb—
"Let once the vindicating ray
"Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
"And steel and fire have done their part

"And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
"So, trial after trial past,
"Wilt thou fall at the very last
"Breathless, half in trance
"With the thrill of the great deliverance,
"Into our arms for evermore;
"And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
"About thee, what we knew before,
"How love is the only good in the world.
"Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
"Or brain devise, or hand approve!
"Stand up, look below,
"It is our life at thy feet we throw
"To step with into light and joy;
"Not a power of life but we employ
"To satisfy thy nature's want;
"Art thou the tree that props the plant,
"Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
"Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
"If any two creatures grew into one,
"They would do more than the world has done:
"Though each apart were never so weak,
"Ye vainly through the world should seek
"For the knowledge and the might
"Which in such union grew their right:
"So, to approach at least that end,
"And blend,—as much as may be, blend
"Thee with us or us with thee,—
"As climbing plant or propping tree,
"Shall some one deck thee, over and down
"Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
"Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
"Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
"Die on thy boughs and disappear
"While not a leaf of thine is sere?
"Or is the other fate in store,
"And art thou fitted to adore,
"To give thy wondrous self away,

"And take a stronger nature's sway?
"I foresee and could foretell
"Thy future portion, sure and well:
"But those passionate eyes speak true, speak
true,
"Let them say what thou shalt do!
"Only be sure thy daily life,
"In its peace or in its strife,
"Never shall be unobserved;
"We pursue thy whole career,
"And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
"Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
"We are beside thee in all thy ways,
"With our blame, with our praise,
"Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
"Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!
"Whether it be thy lot to go,
"For the good of us all, where the haters meet
"In the crowded city's horrible street;
"Or thou step alone through the morass
"Where never sound yet was
"Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
"For the air is still, and the water still,
"When the blue breast of the dipping coot
"Dives under, and all is mute.
"So, at the last shall come old age,
"Decrepit as befits that stage;
"How else wouldst thou retire apart
"With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
"And gather all to the very least
"Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
"Let fall through eagerness to find
"The crowning dainties yet behind?
"Ponder on the entire past
"Laid together thus at last,
"When the twilight helps to fuse
"The first fresh with the faded hues,
"And the outline of the whole,

"As round eve's shades their framework roll,
"Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
"And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
"Of yet another morning breaks,
"And like the hand which ends a dream,
"Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
"Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
"Then——"
Ay, then indeed something would happen!
But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,

The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The courtyard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfry
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:

For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
  She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
  By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
  Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
  Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
  So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
  Such a reward,—I should have gone home
      again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
  Such as friends in a convent make
  To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
  These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
  And the palfry bounded,—and so we lost her.

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in

The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the sparerib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness
—But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes you— sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry—
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,

And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse:
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

You're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparklingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:
And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,

And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do:
I must see this fellow his sad life through—
He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with;
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get done with:
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then I shall scrape together my earnings;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses:
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—

What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
"You never knew, then, how it all ended,
"What fortune good or bad attended
"The little lady your Queen befriended?"
—And when that's told me, what's remaining?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

IS SHE NOT PURE GOLD, MY MISTRESS?

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

Fame

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by and by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

Love

So, the year's done with!
(Love me for ever!)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever!
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(Love me for ever!)

SONG

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall!

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over;
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;
"I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day
"Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
"Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
"Might praise him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
"Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
"There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so
"New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:
"I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
"And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
"Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—
"Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
"The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
"Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:
"Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

MEETING AT NIGHT

THE grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch

And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

TIME'S REVENGES

I'VE a Friend, over the sea;
I like him, but he loves me.
It all grew out of the books I write;
They find such favour in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage looks
Because you don't admire my books.
He does himself though,—and if some vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign land
To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humoured smile
That I told him "Better have kept away
"Than come and kill me, night and day,
"With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
"The creaking of his clumsy boots."

I am as sure that this he would do,
As that St Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me!
—Yes, rather would see him than not see,
If lifting a hand could seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady—there he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends!
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the face of her, the eyes of her,

The lips, the little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth; and she
—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven; there must be hell;
Meantime, there is our earth here—well!

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*)

"HEIGHO!" yawned one day King Francis,
"Distance all value enhances!
"When a man's busy, why, leisure
"Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
"'Faith, and at leisure once is he?
"Straightway he wants to be busy.
"Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
"Caught thinking war the true pastime.
"Is there a reason in metre?
"Give us your speech, master Peter!"
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
"Men are the merest Ixions"—
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
"—Heigho—go look at our lions!"
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.
And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold

Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir de Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most.
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled:
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead:
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,

The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?
Ah, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.
"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may
well swear,
("No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
"And so can afford the confession,)
"We exercise wholesome discretion
"In keeping aloof from his threshold,
"Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
"Their first would too pleasantly purloin
"The visitor's brisket or surloin:
"But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?
"Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on

The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
"So should I!"—cried the King—"'twas mere vanity,
"Not love, set that task to humanity!"
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter,
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
If she wished not the rash deed's recalment?
"For I"—so I spoke—"am a poet:
"Human nature,—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
"Of the deed proved alone by the word:
"For my love—what De Lorge would not dare!
"With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!
"And the endless descriptions of death

"WHEN THE HEART SUFFERS A BLOW"

" He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
" I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
" Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
" For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
" Must offer my love in return.
" When I looked on your lion, it brought
" All the dangers at once to my thought,
" Encountered by all sorts of men,
" Before he was lodged in his den,—
" From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
" Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
" With no King and no Court to applaud,
" By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
" Yet to capture the creature made shift,
" That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
" —To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
" Of the pit, on no greater pretence
" Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
" Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
" So, wiser I judged it to make
" One trial what 'death for my sake'
" Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
" Than to wait until time should define
" Such a phrase not so simply as I,
" Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
" The blow a glove gives is but weak :
" Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
" But when the heart suffers a blow,
" Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)

—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst
turn
If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first
earn!"
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown
firmer:
"Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

Letchworth : At the Arden Press